

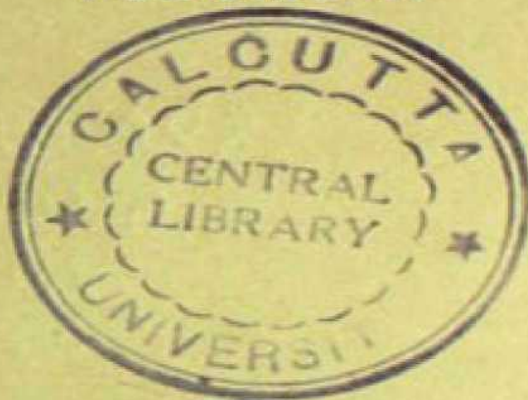


# COLLECTED POEMS

MANMOHAN GHOSE

Author of Love Songs and Elegies and  
Songs of Love and Death

VOLUME II



UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

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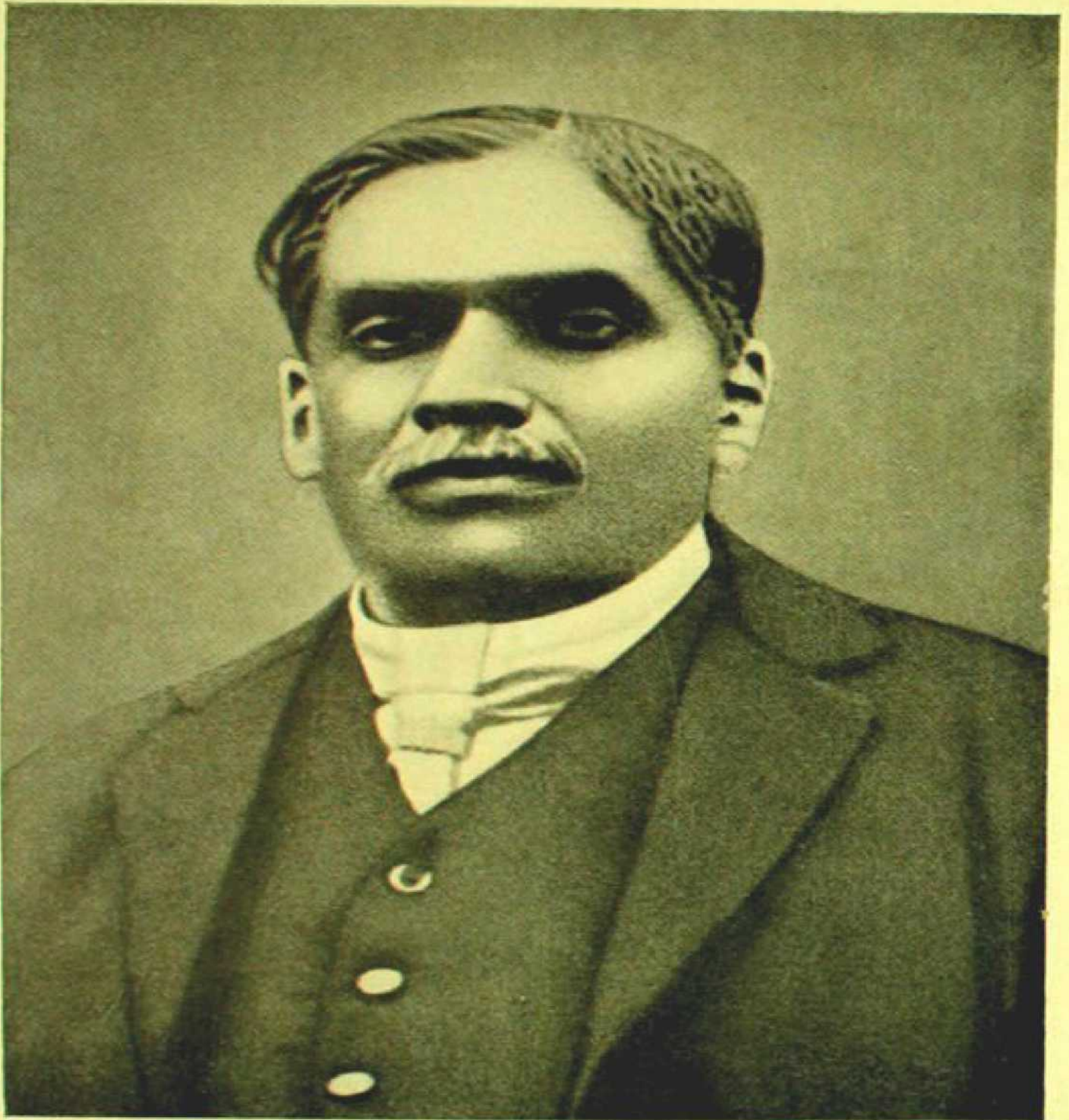


# *Perseus*

## The Gorgon-Slayer

### PART I

Edited by  
**LOTIKA GHOSE, B.LITT. (OXON)**



MANMOHAN GHOSE (1869—1924)  
at the age of 42.



## PREFACE

1898 was the year of Manmohan Ghose's marriage. It was also the year when his epic, *Perseus, the Gorgon-Slayer*, was started. Having settled down to family life and happiness, he wished to fulfil his long-cherished desire of writing something more substantial than the short lyrics which he had been writing hitherto. Even now, however, his long and exacting duties as a junior professor hindered concentrated attention and in India he had to work in isolation, dissociated as he was from the encouragement and friendly criticism of his fellow poets and literary friends in England and entirely cut off from the mainstream of contemporary English poetry.

When Manmohan Ghose joined St. Paul's School, London, he already knew Greek well. A copy of *Alcestes* of Euripides which he used in the Manchester Grammar School bears the date 1884—the year in which the poet probably left the Grammar School. Laurence Binyon gives a dramatic account of his first sight of the poet and notes about his literary tastes. 'He was well read in the English poets, better read than I in the Elizabethans and older lyrists. But what struck me was his enthusiastic appreciation of Greek poetry, not so much for the texts prescribed in the school as those he had sought out on his own account. Theocritus, Meleager and above all Simonides were his special favourites. I had imagined that an Oriental's taste must of necessity be for the luxuriant and ornate and was surprised that he should feel such a strong attraction for the limpid and severe.' Manmohan Ghose's letters to Binyon (1887-1890) also testify to the poet's enthusiastic appreciation of Greek art. After his return to India he spent much of his meagre pay in buying reproductions and expensively illustrated books on Western art. His enthusiasm for Homer started early. In 1889 he wrote to Binyon: 'I spent whole days in doing almost nothing but the Iliad, allured by the thunder of these gleaming battle pieces and at night the forms of splendid heroes grouped so nobly together would not leave my mind but still fought and fell mingling very strangely with other dreams. There are no people, I think, in whom I become more passionately interested as Homer's men. They are strong and yet so



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gentle, simple and frank as children, and altogether so full of *force and fascination*, as Walt Whitman would say.' And again, the poet writes about the Iliad, 'What glorious fire and rapidity of verse it has! and what is more what glorious truth and nature!—How does Homer manage to be so wise while he is at the same time the simplest and most naïve of poets? Merely, I suppose, because Homer looked upon life with his simple full Greek eye, and his observations on life came half unconsciously and with easy spontaneity like great golden stars out of the clear firmament of his narrative.' This enthusiasm for Homer never waned and the Iliad became almost a literary scripture to him.

What more natural than that Manmohan Ghose should choose a subject from Greek legend for his *magnum opus* and embody it in the form of a Homeric epic. The legend of Perseus was chosen because it gave the poet the opportunity to deal with topics of universal significance.

Manmohan Ghose's epic, *Perseus, the Gorgon-Slayer*, is both a legend and a symbol. According to the poet, Medusa, who symbolizes stagnation and annihilation that 'lay at the root of earth and sea, slowing down all progress and had already sent her petrifying gaze into the heart of all things which was the reason why everything was stagnating on the whole surface of the globe and she would finish her work by rising and stiffening into stone one by one, with her slow gaze, all living beings.'

One of the central ideas of the poem is progress, progress from grosser to subtler forms, progress towards a greater sensitiveness of response and progress of mankind towards a greater perfection (progress in history).

The Titans represent the violent, uncontrolled forces of cosmic nature and life. Their defeat at the hands of Zeus and the Olympic gods represents the conquest of the natural and life forces by the forces of the mind and intellect, the replacement of anarchic turbulence by law and order. Man has been created by Zeus with the help of Prometheus to be his instrument towards a greater perfection. In man's possibility for greater perfection lies his superiority to the cosmic gods.

The ethics of the poem as conceived by the poet is the birth of the soul in history and it is Asia who will deliver mankind from the shackles of the natural, vital and mental forces and enable man to rise to the spiritual plane. All men, each in his



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own way, will participate in this movement. 'The strong and angelic spirits break the sleep and petrification of Nature, the heroes by their courage, the martyrs by their suffering, saints by purity, seers by austere contemplation and thought or the active preaching of moral and spiritual ideas, the artists and poets by infusing soul and spiritual beauty into conditions of matter conquering brute earth and ordinary men by following the example of the human seers and pioneers of mortal life.'

The scope of the epic is large. Heaven, earth and all the worlds as well as history and time are embraced within its range. The opal shield of Athene through which Perseus glimpses the future, the cloaks of the wind-gods which he captures from them and in whose texture is woven the map of the world, give the poet the scope to enlarge the immediate subject of the legend.

In the epic the Gorgons represent the genius of destruction, Medusa represents nihilism, annihilation and disbelief in the future world. Hades, on the other hand, represents the future world and belief in it. It is in Hades that the blessed spirits await the hour of their release when the time will be mature for their emergence and action in the world. The golden apples, which are a bar to the emergence of Medusa and whose gleam lights the way of the blessed spirits as they journey upwards to the destined soil for their heroic deeds, have to be stolen in pursuance of the Titan conspiracy to prepare the way for Medusa's coming and Perseus has to go to the underworld to lead the spirits up.

In the epic Herpe, the adamant sword with which Medusa is slain, represents 'the overpowering stream of tendency in cosmic and human things which is leading the world to an unknown issue'.

The creative effort to write an epic whose magnitude was so great required a free and happy mind. But in 1905 the poet's wife was struck by a strange illness which lasted with a short break till 1918 when she died. About this illness and its effect on himself, Manmohan Ghose writes to his friend Binyon in 1916: 'About three years ago I had a visit—it was a delightful experience—from R. C. Trevelyan with a kind message from you... For many days I was in a state of delightful excitement and began several times a letter which would reopen our old friendship but found it difficult to break the ice, and soon fell back into my usual apathetic despondency. And for the sad



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cause of it all—it is my wife's illness—a strange and mysterious nervous malady with complete loss of speech and the use of her right limbs. This is combined with psychical and hysteric symptoms, and aversion to all food. Sometimes, once for a whole year, she had to be fed forcibly. It began in 1905 and with a break of two years in which she partially recovered, has continued now for ten years—the whole space between when I heard last from you and the present moment. You cannot imagine the terrible nervous strain, the utter fatigue and despondency of attending such a sufferer day after day for so many years. And with this the utter friendlessness of life out here. I think I can truly say that for many years not a friendly step has crossed my threshold and for myself my life has been spent between my lecture room in college and my own doorstep. With English people in India there can only be a nodding acquaintance or official connection and with Indians my purely English bringing up and breeding puts me out of harmony: denationalised, that is *their* word for me.'

Not only did dark clouds overshadow his personal life but his professional life was shadowed by the suspicion of Government. His service as a Professor in the Presidency College was not confirmed, and he remained on the same pay from 1906 to 1917. Yet, admittedly, he was one of the most brilliant professors of English. The reason for this was the extremist and revolutionary activities of his two brothers, Aurobindo and Barindra, which led to their arrest under a charge of conspiracy to overthrow the established government when bombs were discovered in their paternal garden house at Manicktola inherited by the four brothers from their father. For a year a death sentence hung over the heads of his brothers. Then Aurobindo was acquitted but Barindra was transported for life. A spiritual change had come over Aurobindo in prison but he continued his political activities and started two new papers, the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma*, but on the eve of his re-arrest Aurobindo secretly left, first for Chandernagore and then for Pondicherry.

Suspicion extended to Manmohan Ghose's epic *Perseus*. In 1909 N. L. Halward, his colleague at Dacca and an admirer of his poetry, wrote to him: 'How does *Perseus* fare? I heard a horrid rumour, I don't remember where, that you were converting him into a political allegory. A bad omen?'



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In 1912 the poet's wife seemed almost recovered and in his summer holidays in 1914 he was thinking of going with his wife and children to England and reviving his literary contacts. If conditions were favourable, he was also thinking of leaving his wife and children there and visiting them every couple of years and thus keeping in touch with contemporary literary trends. But in March 1914 his wife's illness relapsed with all the old symptoms. Soon the clouds of war started gathering on the European horizon. All the poet's plans were frustrated and the weary routine of moving from his wife's sick bed to his college lecture room and back started once more. With the outbreak of the First World War the Criminal Investigation Department in India became very active. Ironically, though Manmohan Ghose's sympathies were entirely with the allies and his dislike of German imperialism and German racialism was intense, watch over the poet was tightened. The British Government in India were haunted with the spectre of his brother Aurobindo as a super-revolutionary who was the brain behind the revolutionary movement and they suspected Manmohan Ghose might perhaps be a link. A plot by the Bengali revolutionaries to smuggle a shipload of arms from Germany was discovered and indiscriminate arrests followed. Manmohan Ghose's health had suffered considerably and he was fast becoming a shadow of his former self. When Rabindranath Tagore and Sir Jagadish Bose warned him that his arrest was imminent, he almost completely broke down with the thought of what would happen to his seriously sick and paralysed wife and his teen-aged daughters in his absence, totally friendless as he was. His daughters on their own initiative went to their father's friend C. R. Das who was then at the height of his legal fame and sought his help. C. R. Das at once took Manmohan Ghose to his house and only allowed him to return after he had convinced the higher authorities of Manmohan Ghose's complete innocence. But his epic *Perseus*, the so-called anti-British 'political allegory', had to be sacrificed. Having won his major point C. R. Das had probably assured the authorities, when they insisted upon it, that Manmohan Ghose would not continue or publish the epic. Sensitive as the poet was on such matters he would not dishonour the word given by his friend on his behalf and sacrificed his life's work. He started a poetic drama, *Nala* and *Damayanti* and when one of his daughters asked him if he would not continue



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Perseus he told her, 'Yes, my child, on the free soil of England if I live to reach it.' Manmohan Ghose did not live to reach the soil of England. A great poem which would have enriched English epic literature, except for the introductory books published in this volume, lies mostly in unlinked passages for the poet wrote under difficult circumstances and as the inspiration came to him. He had intended to write the connecting passages and weave them into a whole when he had finalized his plan but the sudden abandonment of the poem and his early death prevented him from completing the epic.

There are 23 volumes of the Perseus MSS each of about 200 to 300 pages lying in the library of the Calcutta University to which institution they were donated in 1938 by his daughters. The oldest MSS volume is about 70 years old. Unfortunately the pages of all the volumes have become too brittle to be handled and the ink is fast fading. Unless immediately micro-filmed, they will be entirely lost. Also, without photostat copies on which work of editing can be done it is difficult to say how much of the poem has been completed.

Will the tragic fate which pursued Manmohan Ghose in life pursue his poetry after his death and will it be shipwrecked between the Scylla of English insularity and pride and the Charybdis of the aggressive linguistic chauvinism of free India? As Laurence Binyon has said, 'to Manmohan Ghose England was the nursing mother of imagination and the dear home of the Muses.' As a matter of fact his poetry is little concerned with India. It is full of English imagery and the flowers and trees of England. But will England accept him as 'a voice among the great company of English singers?' John Freeman would certainly have it so and writes, 'Mr. Binyon does not think that an Indian reader would feel Manmohan Ghose a foreign poet and I think no English reader would regard him as an Indian. Certainly he should be in our anthologies as an English poet.' The truth is that Manmohan Ghose though he is a child of the English muse, by temperament and spiritual heritage he is Indian. In this lies his distinctive note in English poetry. Sturge Moore felt this and in a letter to his daughter wrote: 'To be so like yet so unlike, to espouse our ideas, yet with such a profoundly different temperament, make your father quite unique in his relation to us. He has such a wonderful sense of the beauty of English words and rhythm, and yet remains like



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some statue of Buddha, as foreign as he is impressive, by his profound sincerity and gentleness.' W. B. Yeats has noted the consistent majesty of his verse. Walter de la Mare, too, realized 'the gift of imagination and grace and majesty of expression' that had gone in the making of Manmohan Ghose's poetry. When Manmohan Ghose read out his poems to Rabindranath Tagore, the latter listened with delighted wonder because, 'each one of his phrases had a felicity of its own,' and the form of his poetry impressed Rabindranath 'as a marvel of craftsmanship'.

Will poetry, appreciated by such great poets, be lost because of literary narrowness and literary prejudice or can we hope that it will come into its own because as Rabindranath Tagore has said, 'A poet is of no particular race. He is not only English or Bengali, he is a poet of all countries.'

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## BOOK I

Muse of the verse of fire, Muse of the voice  
Of the high beauty called Calliope,  
Thy ancient silence dare I interrupt?  
Thou who with such clear ardour still dost turn,  
From every flower that sprinkles Helicon,  
Of noblest action and of deeds to sing ;  
Say, loftiest, on the sweet Parnassian sward,  
Why standest thou, thy mighty hand restrained  
Upon thy harp, and lean'st disdainfully  
Tranced in a hush marmoreal. The fair choir  
Around thee on the sweet Parnassian sward,  
Or sit or lean, yet rising oft inspired  
Snatch from the boughs their leaf-hung heavenly lyres,  
As some far rumour of this mortal pale  
In joy or pain imploring accents sweet  
The strings beseech. Nor then refrains to give  
To our heart's cry her lute Euterpe, nor  
Her's Erato unto our tender fire ;  
From her rapt look Polymnia consents  
And greatly crashes on her stormy lyre  
Mask'd in tragic woe Melpomene.  
Thou only mute disdainful silence keep'st.  
O break at last the long, the marble hush  
Muse of the strain majestic. For behold  
What voiceless cries from earth thine ear beseech !  
O once more sweep the spirit-stirring string  
Wherever faints upon this battlefield  
One soldier of heaven's host, wherever now  
Fresh courage takes the exulting seethe of hell,  
To hearten right and quail the heart of wrong  
Peal forth one puissant strain. How long wilt thou  
Avert thee from the dear imploring verse  
Thine orphan that laments, bereav'd of thee.  
Bereav'd of thee heroic actions mourn.  
Thou therefore, while thy sisters toward thee look  
In wonder soft to see thy mighty hand  
Seek once again the ancient string, and hushed  
Pause on their harps to listen, strike and sing



## PERSEUS

Of Perseus and the fierce illustrious quest,  
The voyage vast that for imperill'd earth  
The champion went, the voyage terrible  
Fierce, terrible after the Gorgon's head.

Who, then, through air upon the dreadful path  
Despatch'd him? Who of the immortal powers?  
Athene, roused, and the sage mind of Zeus ;  
The sovereign eye, the wisdom whose one look  
Sweeps all, and the beneficence whose hand  
For all provides, the puissance, sire of things,  
Who helps the crawling earth-worm, and sends forth  
On tasks superb his heroes terrorless.  
He now upon the sheer and solemn peak  
From whence he gazes, lean'd above the world  
Sat pondering in deep of night profound.  
In deep of night ere noon'd the highing stars,  
He had withdrawn him from his golden halls,  
To meditate on that sheer brink, aloof  
'Mid whispering pines. The far down dreaming earth  
Beneath the starry fret of such a heaven  
As gives to the All-seer prospect wide,  
Lay, conscious of his gaze,—the continents.  
But near about him brooded everywhere  
A solemn ecstasy of sacred dread :  
For the dark face of things had felt, and thrilled  
At the Celestial presence. Towering pines  
High overhead, their sombre rustling ceased,  
The shivering joy of their dusk boughs to drop  
On his stern brow melodious hovering thoughts.  
And a like horror of adoring awe  
Yet deeper hid the enmossed violet,  
Beneath the ferny base of that high rock,  
On which he sat. From all sides softened came  
The voice of falling torrents ; visages  
More than foam-pale they on the Thunderer gazed :  
They might not cease from falling, but their voice  
Subdued they sent revering the High Power.  
Bowed to his own deep thought the Thunderer sat  
In stillest meditation, nor once stirred.  
One mighty hand held curb'd the bickering bolts,  
The flash and fiat of his thundered will :



# BOOK I

The other on the sweep of his dread beard,  
 Paus'd in procrastination, so remained  
 And moved not. Was it some majestic care  
 Such as oft tasks the eternal brooder thus  
 Might seem, on this still night, to have drawn thus tranced  
 To earth's wide bosom his star-counsell'd Look  
 To ponder o'er creation, his fair flower  
 And tasks too delicate for day's bright stir  
 Invisibly in the dim hush perfect.  
 Perhaps to lay the first stone of some town  
 Or to its downfall mouldering the last  
 To earthquake shatter: now to hearten right  
 With secret triumph, or as secretly  
 Lure on oppression vengeance long prepared:  
 To track the bloody foot; and evermore  
 To ease the world on Atlas' neck, and keep  
 Orion from the huddling Pleiades.  
 None of these cares majestic drew that day  
 Earthward, as eve came on the sovereign eye:  
 Nor now, when light and life together ebb'd  
 Over the world, westering in weary red,  
 Toward the streets of Heaven the sovereign ear  
 For music lean'd, though now on his great lyre  
 Soul-lifting, grand, harmonious Phoebus crashed,  
 Now, through the gathering gloom. At moments came  
 Of that high holy revel of the Gods,  
 Sweet wafted sounds; or silence, one wide ear  
 To ecstasy, with all the Muses sang.  
 And random on the nostrils of the air  
 Came, in rich vagrant wafts, ambrosia  
 Or nectar poured, as youthful Hebe went  
 Serving the Gods: the sound of golden cups:  
 And now at times from out celestial feast  
 Burst inextinguishable, in crashing peals  
 That ceased not, the great laughter of the Gods.  
 Deaf to high mirth, mindless of feast divine,  
 Aloof under the stars Omnipotence  
 In solemn meditation sat, nor stirred,  
 Brooding, with his thought-weighted forehead bowed.  
 The world-wide murmur of the darkened Earth  
 To the eternal ear still audible  
 Down to its least sound into slumber hushed



## PERSEUS

Creation slept, but the Creator sat  
 Over his world and pondered. None durst break  
 Of all the Gods that awful solitude  
 And none had sought to have broken, had not now  
 Pallas on her bright shield in heaven's mid-feast  
 Of danger warn'd to her lov'd demigod  
 Her Perseus brave and Danaë, alarm'd  
 Lest, if they wrecked, Zeus afterward should chide,  
 Risk'd rather to provoke his present wrath,  
 (Herself with wrath and indignation burn'd)  
 And wisely rash broke in upon the hush  
 Of that lone meditation. The tranc'd Power  
 Felt, through his trance, the virgin Goddess come.  
 And while she paus'd, nor durst at once draw nigh  
 Full of simplicity and lovely fear  
 To think what thought might furrow that sage brow,  
 Upon whose arch far-augur'd history  
 Hung pois'd, the world's dim future and its fate,  
 He call'd to her, and turning spake, and said:  
 'What brings thee, Pallas, from heaven's blissful feast,  
 So near the sacrosanct star-counsell'd seat  
 Of brooding and world-task'd omnipotence?'  
 He spoke, and the sonorous thunder roll'd  
 Of his deep voice, the living voice of Power,  
 Up the high rocks and down the abysmal vale.  
 All things beneath, all Nature heard that sound,  
 And shook to feel in those almighty tones  
 How curb'd soe'er, no small displeasure break  
 And rattle in the utterance. But not so  
 Pallas; although upon the blast she swayed  
 Of sovereign ire, as eagle glorying  
 To taste the storm that gives his pinions power,  
 She stood her ground, the wise inspiratress  
 Of the deep mind, cities, inventions, arts  
 And government, the chaste and maiden strength  
 Of law, and law against licentious will.  
 Right in the middle of her cause she plunged  
 And boldly all her indignation spake:  
 'O father, throned above the strife of things  
 With thy controlling sceptre, say, how long  
 Shall the brute, insolent, o'erbearing power  
 Of baffled Polydectes still with war



## BOOK I

Enchafe the strength of thy dear, valiant son  
 And still afflict with warrior wooing rude  
 Thy Danaë? In foam-wash'd Olpae now  
 Behold them. Galley upon galley arm'd  
 Drives down on them in Dicty's citadel  
 The king-led powers of Hellas. Ares heads  
 The tumult, raging uncontrollable,  
 Offspring of thee, whom not thy own bolt awes.  
 With him there goes the Laughter of the sprays,  
 Luring that storm of lances ; the world's charm  
 By mortals and immortals call'd,—its plague,  
 All-licens'd Aphrodite. Her restrain  
 Father, restrain thy slaughter heaping son  
 Else look to see her whom thy own lips call  
 Thy wisdom and thy daughter, thy serene  
 Sane energy, thy clear-eyed maiden calm,  
 Take quickly from thy slow, long-suffering hand  
 Indignant thunder, irk'd at thy strong curb  
 And in resistless wrath sweep down to earth,  
 And hasting to Seriphos there chastise  
 Proud trampling might and lawless arrogance.  
 So said she, reckless of what wrath she waked,  
 Or rather with the sting of her sharp words  
 To rouse, suspended o'er the curb'd flash,  
 Paus'd o'er his brooding bolts, her brooding Sire.  
 For sorely was she chaf'd, herself, to think,—  
 She, in whose special care for mightiest ends  
 He had his own dear son confided deep.  
 His own dear son and Danaë,—that he  
 Not seemed to care though all the might of Greece  
 Chieftains and kings by Polydectes led,  
 For his death lusted, for her beauty burn'd.  
 So spake impatient Pallas ; but with voice  
 Harmonious, deep-toned as Nature's self,  
 Her thunders and her murmurs all in one,  
 The august slow pilot of the world replied :  
 ' Thou thine impatience bright rather control,  
 O maiden strength, O energy all male,  
 Wisdom that, without mother, flashing, cam'st  
 From my full brain. The splendour of that zeal  
 That arms thy soul in wrong'd justice' right,  
 Curb for the world's wide welfare, O my child.



## PERSEUS

For him that doth so tempest, the war-god,  
 Tumultuous, rash and for the sea-born flame  
 His fair ally, bethink thee, they subserve  
 Necessity, nor even myself may curb.  
 He hews, she plants the noble tree of man  
 Branching in beauty that from his stern axe  
 Finds air and room to soar and to aspire.  
 Except for him, man's soon-dull'd slothful spirit  
 Had never felt the aspiration sheer  
 From the earth-gloom, the mortal strife, the scent  
 Of dead leaves and of dying, to emerge,  
 Up from the dwarf'd and wrestling interlock  
 Of Nature, and to shoot air-swept and free  
 Full in the blue smile of eternal heaven.  
 What! frownest thou? And in thy secret soul  
 Still dost accuse me that too lax I hold  
 Too slackly mild, the steep, down-crashing bolt?  
 Accuse me not, accuse the starry guilt  
 Ancestral, for that Uranus, that Heaven  
 The pre-primaeval, brook'd not with his stars  
 To brood forever o'er his spouse, the Earth  
 And fatherly embrace his Titan sons,  
 But covetuously plotted to devour  
 His offspring and in them the silent world,  
 Then in the germ, this glorious harmony  
 Which universal yearning, first of things,  
 Held dimly huge. Had he not maimed himself  
 Ere Kronos maim'd, never had earth then ail'd,  
 Then never had weak frailty mined the world  
 Nor sour necessity on me imposed,  
 Successor to a sceptre sapp'd with ill,  
 Laboriousness, the difficult degrees,  
 On which I raise the dom'd o'erarching bliss  
 Stone upon slow stone building. On his crag  
 For that he would outstride my wisdom slow  
 Prometheus rues his error; which do thou  
 Shun, Pallas! Mirror of thy father, learn  
 From these world-baffled hands majestic use  
 Of hindrance that but helps, bare fruiting boon.  
 Suffer this towering ascent of sails,  
 Thou Cypris of the beauty of the mind,  
 Mars of its noble strife, for well thou know'st



# BOOK I

Thou at least, Wisdom, my co-labourer  
 How they, thy rivals, do but blow for us,  
 With joy and pain, the dim immortal spark  
 In Godward-striving man. She grammars him  
 In love and beauty: he in his stern school  
 Of battle and of effort lessons him.  
 They on the body work, we on the mind,  
 The all of deathless in him. Where they end,  
 Must we begin, make of their ferment sour  
 Our sweet wine, our foundation what they bring  
 Of tears and guilt and misery rough-hewn  
 To build on these the blue ethereal bliss.  
 Never, I say, as in the warrior stream  
 Of death-impassioned heroes have they brought  
 For that sky birth, for us to work upon,  
 Matter so rich. I tell thee, murmur not,  
 Although thou see thy pure high-minded charge  
 My Danaë, upon affliction's wave  
 Let drift again, while absent for world-ends  
 Her terrorless and noble Perseus goes:  
 Though thou see Olpae sink in storm and wreck  
 And her a captive haled through burning streets,  
 Exclaim not; but remember that wild maze  
 Of Io's treading and the gadfly's sting,  
 The long wave swum and all Europa's pain  
 And Semele dead in my lightning's arms.  
 They for the world's bliss wept and bled and died  
 Those heroines high-sorrowed. And think'st thou  
 When not to throne now kingship high in Crete  
 Or found sage Memphis, or Iacchus send  
 Earth to initiate in the grape's glad fire  
 When I would set upon all these the crown  
 And consummation, think'st thou I would spare  
 One pang that serves creation? I, the power,  
 Whose starry wisdom to my secret aim  
 With such slow strength of thrift inexorable  
 So gently irresistibly diverts  
 Whatever is done and suffered amongst men  
 Or the high Gods, whate'er is thought or said  
 And rallies all to my great purposes.  
 So spake, and on that word abruptly ceased  
 Ceased thundering soft omnipotence severe,



## PERSEUS

And seem'd in meditation plung'd again.  
 But awfully within his puissant grasp,  
 Sign of his energy awakened, flashed  
 Heaven's curb'd impatient lightnings ; the leash'd fire  
 In bickering flashes leap'd to find its aim.  
 But she the kindred fire of wisdom arm'd,  
 Stood, her impetuosity reined in,  
 Meek, with bow'd head deep pondering. Her heart  
 Swell'd with divine compassion for the fate  
 Of Danaë. What new-edg'd pain for her  
 Upon the glowing anvil of his thought  
 Might now the Olympian forge? First, daughter doom'd  
 To mother her dear father's murderer,  
 Then by that father to the murderous deep  
 Committed, with her little gold-haired son,  
 In the drear night, the tempest wild. Upcast  
 A swoon'd, pale gift of pitying Nereids  
 In Dicty's net, what toil was hers to guard  
 From the Seriphian king enamoured deep  
 Her dear head, sainted with the thunder flash  
 And pure with rush of rain'd omnipotence.  
 All those wild wanderings on mountain ways,  
 The haunted misery, the pursuit, the clutch  
 On her gold tresses till thunder unclutched,—  
 Must she the woeful labyrinth all retrace?  
 Nor now, grown up a shoot of heroes fair  
 Her strong son by her side to be her shield  
 And most effectual shelter. What exploit  
 Was that the father spake? And to achieve  
 What task superb should he go terrorless?  
 Mute, pitying, musing the hard ways of heaven,  
 Nor did she not remember.

The Goddess started, when abruptly now  
 As it had ceas'd once more the voice of Power,  
 Roll'd up and murmuring from the deeps of mind  
 With surge more fresh than ocean broke on her:  
 'Let be the suffering fate of Danaë  
 But to the boundless wave of my deep love  
 Committed, and let be my warrior son.  
 But thou my wisdom's spear and shield and helm,  
 Help thou the glorious thought that holds me paused.



## BOOK I

Swift-seeing, slow-considering, not for this  
 Nor that part careful but the mighty whole:  
 I need thy counsel, child, I need thy help.'  
 Grave accents of world-thwarted sapience  
 Thus solemn fell on Pallas' ear: at once  
 Surprised and thrilled the earnest splendour said:  
 'How may I aid thee, Father? Thou from heaven  
 Sage, self-sufficient without check or stop,  
 With pauseless urge of thy almighty power  
 Dost move in gentlest wise the universe  
 Slow to perfection, to the far design  
 Invisibly each hour in secret led.  
 We, straws upon thy current, gods and men  
 Waifs of thy purpose, are borne unawares,  
 Upon thy deep will's sourceless stream. But now  
 What checks the glorious glide of thy great calm?  
 What peril dost thou portend where I may help?'  
 To which replied, while thunderous emphasis  
 Rattled in those great syllables, the Highest:  
 'Such peril as all creation menaces.  
 Medusa, that life-curdling Face! 'Tis she,  
 Far in the mutinous and Titan deeps,  
 Who slings from thence at man's upflowering toil  
 And my sown purpose (the world-bliss to be)  
 The winter of her slowly-freezing eye,  
 She, Pallas, now upon the world impends.'

He paused: for the annunciation dread  
 Had shook all life on that starr'd steep, the birds  
 Beasts, pine-trees, the hid flowers, the moon-brimm'd skies,  
 Nay, Pallas' self. A sterner gravity  
 A haughtier paleness sat on her proud cheek  
 As rack'd, perplex'd, incredulous she said:  
 'The baleful child of Ceto? She a peril?  
 She from her home and ocean duress break?  
 It were as credible that Atlas' self  
 Had all but free from his world-wearied nape  
 Wrench'd the blue heaven's tremendous architrave.  
 O pardon, Father, if not all at once  
 I gate more dolour than my grieving ear  
 Can well for wonder entertain. But who,  
 To thee of this dread bruit came messenger?'



## PERSEUS

'Hermes, and with bereavement Demeter  
 From the gold-reft Hesperides returned.'  
 He said ; but the unconquerable maid  
 Disdainful, still upon her dreadless lip  
 Murmur'd incredence of a blow so huge  
 Ejaculating, thus at last exclaim'd :  
 'The mother of corn made childless once again!  
 News of itself orb-striking! For, if sooth  
 If, as I gather from thy dreadful word  
 That dimly hints I know not what dark loss  
 Betid to Life's gold apples which o'erhang  
 Death and down-gulping Acheron,—the fruit  
 Whose wafted perfume far as to the dead  
 Thrills, and behind rekindled ardours dead  
 Guides back the birthward way purg'd spirits from gloom  
 Replenishing existence,—if that gold  
 On thy august lips, Sire, with sad loss wed  
 Mine ear heard true,—O, if discomfited  
 Without Persephone, without the flowers  
 Waved by his bright wand up, without the surge  
 And rally of creation Hermes comes,  
 That, of itself, unchild's not Demeter,  
 Not summer alone, nor spring, but all vast time  
 Of all the cheated future! Yet who dares  
 Stay her lur'd step within the wintry gloom.  
 O madness, that would think, the birthward gate  
 Hesperian barr'd forever, to unchain  
 The stony horror and heart-freezing gaze  
 Of beautiful Medusa from the deep.  
 Who against bolts invincible so bold  
 As pal'd first to conceive the audacity  
 Of such a plot, and thy steep vengeance weighed,  
 Yet to the execution did proceed?  
 Was it the murmuring dark of mutinous Night  
 Vast, ancient Night, the roomy silence old  
 Remembering? Or Earth prolific-womb'd  
 The many-breasted irk'd with clamorous brood?  
 I roam perplext conjecture nor find clue!  
 Shall I say Hell's immitigable King  
 Breaks compact with thee, and that he may keep  
 By his dark side bloom and Persephone  
 Forever and for all months stayed with him



## BOOK I

Dares to thwart thee, though he to thy great scheme  
This starry and harmonious pact, so deep  
Pledged irrecoverably his dark word  
And swear in the beginning? How should he  
But give adhesion to the grand design  
He and Poseidon? Though thy brethren vast  
Of Rhea and Kronos born, jealous of thee?  
When they beheld creation dawn in power  
And beauty thy eternal work begun,  
Lost in the largeness of thy plan they stood,  
Mute, slowly dawning to conceptions grand ;  
They could not but in admiration yield—  
When they beheld o'er the Titans whelm'd  
And the whelm'd Giants, how to keep unscorch'd  
This beautiful soft ether, this fair dream,  
Diaphanous, thou hadst in Etna pent  
Boring those nostrils for his fury's vent  
The tortur'd forge of vast Typhoeus' rage  
And saw the bow'd colossal firmament  
In such severity of steadfast peace  
On Atlas' shoulder spann'd and riveted,  
They, and all powers the mightiest, mined with awe  
Came to thee. Welcom'd with such look benign  
As from thy blue o'erarching heaven since smiles,  
Thou each a gratified participant  
Of power and function in thy spacious plan  
Magnanimously didst all Gods admit.  
Then of the realms of dolour Hades took  
Inexorable, stern, the iron sway  
To king the imprisoned dead. Waste ocean's foam  
Poseidon chose : To curb the wild wave's play  
Best pleased the stormy monarch of like mood,  
Impetuous, frank, soon wrathful and soon mild.  
But thou, O father, in the heaven-bowed yearn  
Of thy beneficence, the toiling earth  
Didst choose ; for in humanity thou saw'st  
Suffering, creating, foiled, yet striving still  
Dim-mirror'd the reflection of thy mind.  
To lift them up, Prometheus-fired, wedg'd in  
Celestial and terrestrial betwixt,  
Midway aspiring, and with them the world,  
Was it not for this cause, Father sublime



## PERSEUS

That holiest Herë carrying with thee  
 To be the mother of men, as thou the Sire,  
 Thou did'st contract the sister-holy bond,  
 The sacrosanct espousal, that hath since  
 Served to bind heaven to the sad earth, ensured  
 Her immortality, creation bloom,  
 Hath covenanted ne'er to fly apart.  
 Ruth, mercy in immortals, awe in men  
 And reverence,—hath all this soldered kiss  
 Of universal nature ratified,  
 This oath and pact twixt sky and sea so blue  
 This merging blend and sacrament of green.  
 Unto the heavenly bridal came all Powers  
 To that Hesperian sward, the maiden garth  
 Of Herë, virgin and forever fresh,  
 Which Kronos, her great sire, to her had given.  
 There were the tables heap'd, the gold thrones set,  
 They came and at the blissful board sat down  
 In awe and solemn joy, the heavenly powers,  
 And none but brought some noble gift for dower  
 To thy august bride, Father ; for they hoped  
 Access of glory and function enlarged  
 To reap unto themselves from that world-knot,  
 Sistering with sweetness, brothering with strength  
 The god-ward striving creature. Earth the fruit  
 Hesperian brought, the triple breast of things,  
 The burning gold of her exuberance  
 To hang in Herë's branches high-embowered,  
 Cool, sky-upclouding foliage, from high rock  
 Seen and deep glen : maternal leafiness  
 Shading all life : And the life-kindling bloom  
 To guard securely she for sentinels  
 Set over them the fair Hesperian nymphs  
 Tall Atlas' daughters, Earth's grandchildren fair.  
 And in their hands to weapon them 'gainst force  
 Of god or ghost or the fallen Titan powers  
 Poseidon and the sea-nymphs gave in charge  
 Abandon'd Herpe, that old Titan blade  
 Hard, ruthless, adamantine, bringing it  
 From the obscure sea-bottom, where it lay  
 Sunk in the deeps. There it had flashing fallen  
 From Kronos' loth and deed-abhorrent grasp



## BOOK I

When Uranus into thin ether shrank  
And the seas reddening gave the Cyprian birth.  
And that the sea-fetched fiery sword might have  
Cool treasure-house, at foot of Herë's tree  
To water it, Poseidon with his mace  
Refted the heavenly pool immaculate  
Chaste Herë's awful bath, where bath'd with her  
Creation ever nubile, ever young,  
Maiden each morn renews her glorious frame.  
Such wonder of expectancy the gods  
From throne to throne, such glorying rapture, held.  
When in its green fortress they saw the fruit  
World-marrying, the keys of love and birth  
Thus garrisoned with beauty, all for joy  
Shouted. In aid of its soul-lifting gleam  
That with the seated calm of Hestia  
Should, in the hearth-fires glow, in nations weld,  
Knit and encourage the god-like effort of man  
No power in heaven but smiling swore support :  
I, Father, this of my energetic spear  
Shield of fore-sight and city-fencing helm  
Laborious manhood took on me to train  
In arts and arms, while noble womanhood  
At the swift shuttle that Arachne rues  
And whirring loom I teach sobriety  
Teach frugal toil and maidenhood its calm.  
Not one of thy bright offspring but with me  
Companion'd in the sacred oath were prompt  
To lift weak men. Hephaestus from his forge  
Thunder's artificer, heaven's magical  
And mighty craftsman, rearer of these towers,  
His anvil, bellows and strong hammer then  
Promis'd ; and the Cyllenean his staff  
And his large-feathered ankles wing'd like wind  
With which he weaves his web world-marrying  
Of high ways and white sails to make from far  
Cities join hands, and lavish o'er the world  
Give to blind Plutus eye and foot and spring.  
Nor we alone, but Powers that lawless range  
The central glow of nature, and scarce bend  
To thy all curbing seasons bland, even they  
Subscrib'd the golden treaty. For when now



## PERSEUS

Up from the marriage-feast Apollo rose  
 And with him the pure Muses interlink'd  
 Made of harmonious dance and lyre and verse  
 One prophesy of all the flood of song  
 That should gush forth for mortals from the streams  
 Of Helicon, then Ares sooth'd and charm'd  
 Swore respite to his war-vext Thracian hills,  
 And to her summer southlands oversea  
 The rosy Licence. She, even she gave pledge  
 To set, chaste limit to her burning will,  
 The western gold and Herë's golden couch  
 Which thou with her, Eternal puissance male  
 With feminine, hast made the sacred bond  
 And seal of bliss, marriage, the world's sane curb,  
 The nurse of sanctity, the school of trust,  
 Oath sworn so deeply between womb and tomb  
 Of perpetuity never to break,—  
 Frail, ship-wrecked newborn nature's sheltering haven.  
 As he, tower shattering Ares swore, subdued  
 To your high parent wills, no more to hew  
 But prune the glorious plant that Hebe rears  
 So she took oath, no longer wantoning  
 With those mysterious powers of dim desire  
 Sex-urging and of generation given,  
 To fill with temperate stir the roomy space  
 Of Nature, and no more uncheck'd to overwhelm  
 With random rush of oversurging life.  
 After them rose and came where Herë sat  
 Primaeval Night, a trailing hush profound  
 Of silence and of stars. No more it seem'd  
 Alien from light, in elder darkness wrapt,  
 Unreconcil'd, but of thy glorious day  
 Accepting the fresh dawn upon her cheek  
 She gave to Herë as her marriage gift  
 Her soundless sons, two mighty stillnesses  
 Sleep that once strove for one dead solemn peace,  
 Sleep, stealing now with sorrow-easing wing  
 To serve thee, upon earth grief's balm to be  
 And toil's refreshment, and in heaven to brood  
 O'er Herë's bower, fresh Hebe's comrade sweet  
 Love's friend and Eileithyia's, bower fellow  
 Of rosy Hymen, Herë's minister.



## BOOK I

And Sleep's twin brother, a vast shadow, Death,  
 Her once hop'd weapon to destroy the world  
 To serve the world's sweet use, its surgeon calm,  
 Inexorably gentle, Night now gave  
 Physician of the ail and press of things  
 With sapient heal of his stern arrows he  
 Stood roomy with deliverance, rich with scope  
 To breathe in for the ever-peopling earth.  
 All these with gifts made the blest marriage rich  
 Of time with the eternal, earth with heaven,  
 And to crown all thy mighty father fallen  
 Snow-headed Kronos Titan enmity  
 Forswearing then, his peaceful envoys sent  
 Oceanus and Tethys in his stead.  
 Though he came not, thy venerated Sire  
 To bless the holy bridal, nor might Love  
 Nor Aphrodite, flashing joy, remove  
 His heavy, saturnine and leaden mood,  
 Morose for loss of sovereignty, not wroth  
 The blissful consummation he abode ;  
 Whence kingliest function unto him should flow,  
 Scarr'd by the thunder, thewless and unthroned,  
 In abdicated royalty to school  
 Heroes and kings, great souls, the unborn dead  
 By Herë's heavenly fruit lured up from death,  
 Led up forever from his lips to learn  
 Kingcraft and strongly shepherd the wide realms.  
 So in his tower, awaiting those proud spirits  
 In Isles to be nam'd Happy he abode.  
 Of all the many and the mighty powers  
 Who swearing then on Herë's gold gave pledge  
 Never to help rebellion's murmuring seethe  
 That still burns fiery 'neath the founded world  
 To shatter thy severe sweet harmony,  
 Who now recalcitrant kicks good, recants,  
 Tears the great bond? Can thy dark brother then  
 The third part of dominion thus break truce?  
 O'er my remembrance peals his promise sworn.  
 For when their gifts all other Gods had given,  
 Last hesitating Hades stood, and naught  
 Offer'd ; when thou, for this alone now lack'd,  
 That life's rich fragrance filling earth and heaven



## PERSEUS

Should reach the dead and from corruption back  
 Lure all things, didst of him mildly demand  
 Boon of his iron sceptre to rift there  
 That awful chasm that now by Atlas' foot  
 Gapes, the dread mouth of going and return  
 For whatsoever draws terrestrial breath.  
 Dark smil'd he as he spoke: "Since every power  
 Hath his adhesion given, shall I not, too,  
 Subscribe, Olympian, to the bland design,  
 Marriage that shall make sky and ocean kiss  
 Yoke things most hostile, yea, wed life to death  
 With progeny. Yet because I dwell deep  
 With death and fear and direst Erebus  
 And therefore one dear splendour not to daunt  
 Forbear to name whose face, a flower 'mid flowers,  
 Yearns my sad heart up through the iron gloom,  
 Grant, Thunderer, and blissful Herë, grant  
 My share in this world-knot, that I bear off  
 Unwoo'd whom here I wed. Let her soft cheek  
 Over oblivion's wash bloom memory,  
 And flowering mid foul torments of the damn'd  
 Ease extreme anguish, o'er the fiery pang  
 That purges them throw hallowing purity.  
 Let her sweet presence in the sunless shade  
 Speak summer, be unto the wintering dead  
 The hope of spring. Grant this, and here I rift  
 A chasm into my wintry gloom so wide  
 That when thy heavenly herald there shall seek  
 The pomp of ghosts, which thither like dead leaves  
 Assemble, and at Hades gate collect,  
 His escort waiting and the heartening lead  
 Of his caduceus, it shall suffice  
 The chasm stupendous to road down to gloom  
 The drifted dead, on that last leafless day  
 Of Autumn; nor when first the sweet sap stirs  
 Shall it be straiten'd; when, behind the surge  
 Of all earth's bloom, heaven's herald shall lead up  
 Murk-blinded, with clos'd eyes toward the light  
 And arms spread earthward, that which bloomiest is  
 Belov'd of thee, my three months' bride in Hell."  
 So, Father, at the blissful marriage-feast  
 Unknown to all, with tacit interchange



## BOOK I

Of understanding 'twixt your sovereign eyes  
 Was struck the solemn pact, which to allure  
 The rally of all Nature yearly still  
 Bereaves one mother's breast. So Hermes still,  
 A Cthonian power by Cthonian powers rever'd  
 Conveys betwixt thee Zeus of sunlit life  
 And thy dark brother the grim Zeus of death  
 The faded generations winter fallen  
 And those that up into the world ascend  
 Through earth's rich sap. And can he now refuse  
 Thy million-times-restored Persephone?  
 What dreadful unimaginable gain  
 To such deed motives the tremendous king?'  
 So, far and wide, insatiate to know all  
 And peril confront with knowledge, Pallas prob'd  
 Hasting calamity. At which the Highest  
 Shook his calm head, that his ambrosial locks  
 Around him wav'd all golden. Some deep word  
 Soft muttering in his Olympian beard,  
 Thus then his great voice came, as when a far  
 Soft thunder in heat-brooding summer speaks:

'O helm'd and shielded Prudence, dost thou guide  
 The nurslings of my sapient thought, my sons,  
 Kings upon earth, yet know'st not the severe  
 Steep lonely grandeur of all-ruling might,  
 The hugeness of the weight of this world-care,  
 My thwarted, conquering task'd beneficence?  
 Not upon Atlas' neck so hugely rest  
 The heavens, as on my all-supporting love  
 The ingrate world; thus thankless to bear up  
 Creation marring the creator's hand,  
 Ever at strife with its own good. O here  
 Here, Pallas, is the grief that gives my heaven  
 A tinge so sad and dims a thousand stars!  
 Here is the pain of my omnipotence!  
 I, in world-clasping azure not for this  
 Not that part labouring but the mighty whole,  
 Meet from your partial minds, that are but parts,  
 Blind, moody oppugnation, hindrance dark,  
 Grudg'd sympathy, or struggling forc'd assent.  
 Thou know'st the sullen force of Titans fallen.



## PERSEUS

Whom conquest should have taught and this great calm  
 That with the strength of extreme gentleness  
 Pressing upon them prostrate hath replaced  
 Their aimless anarchy. Thou hast seen oft  
 Their fury in earth's entrails boil and spume  
 And daily seest in fierce Hyperion's blaze  
 The pent force of how vast an anger serves  
 Omnipotence, and hardly doth subserve ;  
 Oft bursts to spew destruction ; yet doth Power  
 Thron'd o'er this calm turn to creative use.  
 To lift the lily's meek head out of earth  
 I milk huge passion ; and from vehemence  
 Send vaguely soft into the violet  
 Hue and perfume. But to let burn the rose  
 What fiery leaping tumult of fierce life  
 Must I control? With that fever of flame  
 In Etna or Vesuvius brimming o'er  
 Make the wheat marrowy, to the grape give fire?  
 Ye, too, the glorious household of the Highest  
 Wise Goddesses and strong laborious Gods  
 Who guide dim-purposed on its mighty path  
 To that undream'd perfection the vext orb ;  
 What shame is this, Athene (dost thou blush  
 To hear me, heavenly child) say must I needs  
 Ever with but your pitted rivalry  
 Your jealous strife conflicting, zeal with zeal,  
 Set you, my children, labouring each his thread  
 At life's great loom, with your cross-working fire  
 Weaving this colour'd battle that is Time  
 And action and the urgèd centuries.  
 Must I for thee intolerably strict,  
 To temper that austerity superb  
 That would swerve all things to thy sober moods  
 And overpress with law and government,  
 Wake thy still peace with Ares' storm of war  
 Sloth-shattering, force-kindling? To restrain  
 My Phoebus, bender of the golden bow  
 Who would with sudden shafts and all at once  
 Pierce dragon ill, yea, on the heavenly strings  
 With music build perfection,—is it fix'd  
 I must his lyre check with thy colder lance ;  
 With Babylon toil-built and the slow years



## BOOK I

Of Memphis ; effort and still effort marr'd,  
That on the anvil of his own fierce pangs  
Through suffering, through heroic effort, man  
May forge at last the durable far bliss.  
And they, thy father's brethren, each a third  
Of Nature, halv'd with my o'erspreading heaven,  
Powers, each an empire, that with upward eye  
Of dark or watery dominion  
Confront my vaulted ether, and scarce brook  
The calm of my blue sovereignty, think'st thou  
They willingly subserve my vast world-ends,  
He in the gloom, he in his ocean-realm  
Do I not know them ever darkly bent  
To thwart me, though unto my boundless plan,  
That ever grows upon their silent thought,  
In ageless admiration pledg'd with me,  
Led on irrevocably, lur'd, compell'd,  
Committed to work out the starry scheme.  
And still, as on their mind the unconceiv'd  
Large daring of my ever-widening thought  
In new horizons opens beauty out,  
Stung, in a spleen of barrenness, they stand  
Wroth, carping at the mighty work not theirs,  
Jealous of all the glory obdurate  
O'erspreading grandeur and compulsion vast  
That presses on them, they conspire to balk  
What challenges and awes their dazzled thought.  
Thou know'st with what participation loth  
Poseidon, in his pride of ocean power  
Oft in still glass locking the molten wave  
Refuseth his moist tribute of thick cloud  
To water the parch'd earth, long days and days  
Mute in a sullen welter, till fierce heats  
Compel, and rising tempests of my wrath,  
My black exacting tempests. Nor were he  
Grim Aīdōneus aught more prompt to give  
Back from his iron gloom the imprison'd dead,  
Were not in that rich furrow subterrene  
Where he but treasures for me the dead world  
My daughter, his mild queen, Persephone  
With Hermes to cheer back and that gold fruit  
The rally of the seasons, birds and flowers





## PERSEUS

And beasts and men, there ripening, perfecting,  
The ghostly seeds of good, souls wintering there  
With chastening thought and sharp reflection purg'd,  
And still of those the noblest and the best  
Join'd with the jealous shears of Atropos  
He doth untimely steal. And for what cause?  
This, that each temper'd weapon, each choice spirit  
I work with, to war down Titanic ill,  
Broke in my hand even in their prime of use,  
He may lure up the slow and stagnant sleep  
Of that hope-killing deed-benumbing gaze  
Medusa, petrefaction beautiful  
At earth's core coldly ambush'd. And his will  
He hath accomplish'd, he and the sea's King  
Not without Cytherea. These two fired,  
He with the beauty of her dreadful face  
And she with pride to snare in love so strange  
So hugely erring from divinity  
A third part of dominion; underseas  
They met, in monstrous dalliance, the pair:  
Where a sunk city of Atlantis old  
Lifts brine-whelm'd towers and glimmering palaces  
And Nereids white-wristed wander down  
Upon the desolate city in the deeps,  
There in thy holy fane where thou didst stand  
Athene, and in thy pure beauty burn  
On thy now vanish'd worshippers, no place  
Less sacred might for such pollution serve,  
There were the direful nuptials celebrate,—  
Abhorrent all-estranging union,  
The sharp divorce of things, that spell'd at once  
Disruption to this married calm supreme,  
Unknitting all that I and Herë knit.  
For straight ensued the theft of her fair fruit,  
The blissful gold that keepeth Hell in awe  
The lure and sting of spirits. For this cause  
We must take counsel swift. How shall we, Pallas,  
Bereft the beckon of creation cheer  
With Hermes in Persephone's glad step,  
The leaves and flowers and with the imprisoned year,  
The dim soul, too, of wintering courages,  
All those half-kindled ardours, heroes dim



## BOOK I

Athirst for deeds, those dead and dreaming strengths  
 Ready to flower up from their past great acts  
 To life again, who to the happy isles  
 Shall stream, the tower of Kronos, to be school'd  
 And in their fate high lesson'd ; souls that break  
 Nature's gross ease and through a thousand wounds  
 Make to the heavenlier nature bleed the world.  
 No longer in the gorges of high dream,  
 In visionary vales, on strenuous crags,  
 Do they, or on the aspiring mountain-slopes,  
 Heroes and heroines, the flower of time  
 Train, exercise and for great toils prepare ;  
 School'd not the least, by that soul-strengthening sight,  
 From each part glimps'd, how deep soe'er in flowers,  
 Teaching high sufferance, Atlas as he stands  
 And lifts with shoulders broad the burdensome  
 Vast load exorbitant, that so to hold  
 Bestoops him, the blue sky's stupendous arch.  
 No more the splendid sight inspirits them.  
 For clouds hide up the serene miracle  
 Of that majestic patience ; nor can they  
 See through the mists the fruit of Herë burn ;  
 In vain doth the vanguard of leading spirits  
 Lean, in the love of their near fate now ripe,  
 They listen for the calling hour, the sweet  
 Constraining beckon of their natal sod.  
 They miss the rush of flowers that leads them on  
 Behind the glad step of Persephone  
 And Hermes' wav'd caduceus. Upon them,  
 The flower of things, the forest of time hangs,  
 Posterity, that leafs not till they come.  
 How shall we then unfrost the fear-stayed foot  
 And captain stride that heartens history on ?  
 Kings, patriots, bards, prophets, martyrs, saints,  
 Who are Medusa's curb her only chain ;  
 The world's rock the sheer column and support,  
 On which I raise the dom'd o'er-arching bliss.  
 Here ceased the supreme utterance. Her wise head  
 Shaking awhile with thoughtful air, at last  
 Pallas replied : ' Hast thou not as a bar,  
 Father sublime, to stay from issuing  
 Even her stony stride, held over her.



## P E R S E U S

Mortal and perishable born, the edge,  
 The riving dint of Herpe's ruthless blade?  
 Fear'd, reverenc'd, of Titan deities ;  
 Heirloom of might from the ancestral prime  
 Descended to thee. Hell and Erebus  
 Remember, and the fallen Powers as well :  
 How in the green sea-depths in Herë's garth  
 Thou keep'st the sharp injustice that so hews  
 Unto its purpose, nor for scruple bates.  
 Thou yet hast put to no severer use  
 The cruel blade than puissance to inspire  
 And kingly sternness in the mind of kings.  
 All those yet uncrowned spirits by Hermes led  
 From gloom, it strengthens on the blessèd crags  
 In fortunate glens where Kronos fall'n and wise  
 Holds his sage school, instructing kingly spirits,  
 Until they issue full of that proud gleam,  
 Each with remembrance of its sheen afire  
 To hold and drive the fruitful plough of rule.  
 Yet, resting from remorselessness, that edge,  
 Her stor'd up death Medusa shivering feels  
 And fearfully looks sideways up to sense  
 The pitchmurk shadow of her coming slayer,—  
 That strong world-champion, Father, whom thy choice  
 Long since forearms, and keeps for him in guard  
 Of the Hesperian nymphs Pluto's dark cap,  
 Therein to buckler his courageous head  
 With helm'd invisibility ; nor less  
 Thou with the fair nymphs keep'st the wallet fair,  
 The scrip all flowers, Earth's Terror slain, to hide  
 Her face up from the else imperill'd world.  
 Thou hast crav'd of me, starry brooding Sire  
 Ever self-counselled, my counsel, my aid.  
 Hear then my plan with sudden haste thought out  
 To cope the danger. That strong champion  
 The fated Gorgon-hunter thou hast chosen  
 Now to his task arouse, what god soe'er  
 Or demigod, thy warrior, thy dear choice  
 Most enviable so gloriously shall arm  
 For the dire quest. Him let empanoply  
 All gods with thine and their celestial strength  
 With those tremendous weapons ; which no power



## BOOK I

In Heaven who still the dolorific arms  
 Treasure for thee, though they in sovereignty  
 Brother and peer thyself, shall dare refuse  
 When thou demandest. Or if that sheer edge  
 And that strange helmet of sight-swallowing gloom  
 Or Hades or Poseidon at request  
 To us accede not, yet shall they be ours.  
 Trust thou for that the baffling secrecy  
 Of Hermes, to elude with eyeless stealth  
 The guards of the weird arms. Him darkly thus  
 Enhelm'd and for his difficult emprise  
 Girt, on the journey dread straightway despatch.  
 Hermes shall dower him with his mighty wings  
 Large leagues to wed with instantaneous foot.  
 I, wisdom's very eye, last gift and best,  
 Shall put before his bosom, my bright shield,  
 Mirror and searchlight of the dark event,  
 Presaging sheen, to guide his wandering step  
 And counsel him. With that he shall evade  
 The force of his Titanic foes, nor need  
 To run the gauntlet of such passless peril  
 As hems his airy road,—way jealously  
 Conceal'd and watch'd, to none clear, god's or men,  
 Except sky shouldering Atlas in the west,  
 Who by the ending sea nam'd after him  
 Stands vast, and in his world descrying eye  
 Treasures the mighty secret. Therefore still  
 It shall bestead him much at every turn  
 The mirroring sage splendour to consult  
 And spell his wild way out. Grim post on post  
 Of Titan watchers sentinel his route.  
 Deep in the far north ocean fog and ice  
 And the weird Graiae watch with their one eye  
 From hand to hand with trembling patience pass'd,  
 Titanic shapes of unconceivèd eld,  
 Daughters, they too, of Phorcus' sea-born brood  
 Far older; and their mortal sister's doom  
 Two other powers, at one birth born with her,  
 Immortal, sentry, Gorgons of like shape  
 And of as freezing face, who in their realm  
 The arctic night 'mid ceaseless whirlwinds bar  
 To dread Medusa that lone way of dread.



## PERSEUS

Then, Father, on the whispering opal sheen  
 Of my prophetic shield he must show high  
 Unto the spirits bewildered and dismay'd  
 Their glorious fate ; who, when they glimpsing read  
 Upon its face (a sea of troubled things  
 Dark, shivering in the storm of their great deeds,  
 Sorrows and darings) history, on its face  
 Portended, they shall need no serpent-wand  
 To guide from the divine prenatal glen  
 Their unborn ignorance ; but the woeful teen  
 The bleeding of his scarr'd and glorious time,  
 Seen on that disc, shall to each generous soul  
 Heroic, ardent, like a trumpet thrill  
 To burst the sleep of unsuspecting bliss  
 And wing them to the dear distracted land.  
 Then too, when he, all other dangers pass'd,  
 Shall hesitating toward the last worst dread,  
 Move, the great sword bright in his bold right hand  
 And in his left the mystic mirroring shield,  
 No slight aid shall the prescient pearl be then,  
 Rich with the sorrows, streaming with the wounds  
 Of all the unborn world, her stony heart  
 Indurated past marble to make melt  
 And ease the mighty stroke that frees the world.  
 So, pleas'd withal that her great Father should  
 Bowed, listen for her weak counsel, her aid,  
 Mov'd to the height, Athene flushed, inspir'd,  
 Her counsel spake. Bright from the mother wit,  
 The daring of invention's mother, leap'd  
 The plan sagacious. But the sovereign power  
 High-sighting to whose ear comes nothing new  
 But he already in his perfect mind  
 Hath limn'd in larger outline, sigh'd and shook  
 His glorious head ; ' A little still it lacks  
 O my soul's image, dear impetuous child,  
 For thy whole ardent thought to square with mine  
 For thy large plan to meet the ends of heaven.  
 Though Hermes fledge and thou with foresight aim  
 This arrow of my purpose, this bold foot  
 Sure to its difficult mark ; and I may hope  
 Since nothing is to me impossible  
 I who compel this ever groaning hulk



## BOOK I

And pilot safe existence, to pass even  
 With such weak oar that rock of Titan peril,  
 Shall I not on another wreck the orb,—  
 The murmuring seethe of all the Olympian powers?  
 Whom, yokefellows of this my starry peace  
 I may not yet so lightly disregard.  
 Hast thou consider'd then the rage of Gods?  
 How they shall chafe dispens'd with and disdain'd  
 From the embitter'd glory of the heaven's  
 To see the blundering doer of the dust  
 That weaponless poor soldier, Man, become  
 My warrior? The tremendous arms for him  
 Fetch'd and for him Poseidon with foul theft  
 Affronted, cheated of the brand sea-hid?  
 Dis of the gloomy hat for him bereaved?  
 Not so may Power that works the world's boon-ends,  
 Just, fearless, wise, beneficent proceed—  
 However my brethren but hold of me  
 In fief blue ocean and the nether deeps,—  
 Then both will I with ceremony due  
 Invite unto my golden hall in heaven  
 For Gorgon-staving counsel, and to them  
 And to all Gods expound the reason deep  
 That so excludes them, and why interdict  
 Of fate ; my will, necessity, my thought  
 Eternal sapience all night entranced  
 Meditating in starry secrecy  
 Risks to an earthly hand the cause of Heaven.  
 I shall call on them of their stor'd bright arms  
 Divesting their self-abnegating strengths,  
 Of pride their souls divesting, naked once  
 For the wide sake of the imperill'd world  
 In austere, magnanimity to arm  
 Aid, guide, attend my peerless man of men,  
 Who thus courageous, though all mortal, goes  
 With that slight brain and those weak human hands  
 Nature's forlorn and lonely volunteer  
 To cope destruction. And if then but two,  
 Thou, Pallas and the helper lov'd of men,  
 Alone step forth to weapon the world's need,  
 Let then who stand back take the consequence,—  
 Scorn, buffet, insult. By their own act then



## PERSEUS

Put in the wrong (they have themselves to blame)  
They can but chide their stiffness, when they see  
The triumphing march and wheel of my intents  
Ride o'er them and their prostrate purposes,  
And see my champion help'd in their despite  
By frailest things, most insignificant  
And noteless, a shook leaf, and crawling worm  
A grain of sand, a blown feather, a weed  
Mutely to counsel and sage hint to give  
Upon this terrible journey. To him, then!  
This steely stroke meant for a Gorgon's quell,  
Whom I long since aglow on the hard strength  
Of my impassioned purpose forge amain.  
The sparks of his bright courage that have leap'd,  
Smit with all strokes of adverse fate, thou hast  
Beheld Athene and hast seen how him,  
Dower'd with my sacred blood, I have not left  
To rust in the dull ease of kingly pomp ;  
But to evoke the difficult rough seed  
Of his pent towering virtue and press out  
The demigod, within no facile field  
Did plant him, thrown upon Seriphian rock.  
And now if on his sole courageous breast  
I hurl, dear child, this mighty armament,  
Thou mayst already know my hid intent.  
It is that, pitted against fearful odds  
Wroth for his mother's peril I may strike out  
The flame of his whole daring and divert  
On the great voyage. Therefore haste at once  
Or ever the first streak purple the east  
To Perseus' side. From slumber make thou leap  
His noble head. Warn him of this dim host  
Stealing to the surprise of Olpae towers  
And of that other mightier ambush tell  
Medusa gather'd for the leap all stone.  
Tell him my steadfast will that private care  
His exil'd hope, his foe, his great revenge,  
The while postponing for a world in peril  
He for the dreadful road at once prepare.  
One day I grant from dawn to rosy dawn  
Wherein to battle and beat down his foes,  
Wherein to wean from earth and Danaë



## BOOK I

His dedicated ardour. The next morn  
Must find him clean my warrior for the west.  
So warn him thou ere daybreak.'

As thus he spoke, the sternness omnipotent  
Nodded with awful brows while thunder roll'd  
Far-flashing in the sovereign hand. It spake  
The rumbling menace of awaken'd power  
To those rebellious Titans in the deep.  
Menace to them, but to Athene haste  
She linger'd not ; not now for Danaë  
But life and thought and Nature pondering  
Deliverance, quickly toward her Father first  
Bow'd love, bow'd sweet humility, then turned  
And shieldless with her mighty lance alone  
Gripp'd to her hand, towering, the very port  
Of Prudence rous'd and rous'd foresight, at once  
From that sheer prospect sprang into the night.  
She hastened back toward Heaven's high golden hall  
And mingled with the blissful revellers  
Nor had the motherly and high regard  
That queens creation, Herë, as she sat  
At the board's head, in her majestic heart  
Nature's imperilment not partly felt  
As she sat there heaven's hostess, mistressing  
The kingless revel. Already she had sent  
The pace all-wing'd, that herald's her behests  
Swift Iris, her rain-fresh ambassadress  
Her anxious word to message, what new thing  
Could hold so long the Thunderer on his peak.  
Over the sombre pines had Iris sped,  
Up cloudy gorges and all torrent spray'd  
Upon the sheer cliff lighted. She had op'd  
For message her ambrosial lip, but then,  
Suddenly stay'd by that sublimity  
Of tense thought, to a craggy boulder's edge  
Retiring stood, aloof and reverent  
In awful expectation on the Highest  
Till he should wake. Nor did she that same hour,—  
The impatient mouth of Herë's grave concern—  
For all her haste-pent feathers audience get  
Nor yet the next. Hour after hour she came



## PERSEUS

And long time watched in wonder lean'd to think  
 What solemn thought so transc'd the Thunderer's face  
 What baffling meditation so long held.  
 For the third time had Iris from the depth  
 And height of that stupendous reverie  
 Shivering with awe gone back. But to return  
 And risk the chance of such wrath as might burn  
 On Herë's brow? She faltering stood, half way,  
 Resolving rather in her faithful heart  
 To face once more the dreadful steep aspect  
 Of brooding and world-task'd beneficence,  
 Rather to stand the buffet of his ire,  
 Again she sought the beetling precipice  
 With sovereign might made awful. She had caught  
 A pine-branch with one hand as for support,  
 And with the other clench'd in the energy  
 Of her resolve, the coverage of a step  
 Took: 'Twas a breathless and a fearful pace.  
 For there she paus'd as rooted. Omens felt  
 Portentous, the precursor of world-change,  
 Made of queen Herë's coloured messenger  
 A lingering still rainbow. For it seem'd  
 As thus she stood, nor dar'd the face supreme,  
 That slowly now creation's tranquil soul  
 Was of some peril aware, whether appris'd  
 By her own frailty, or from his bow'd head  
 Whose grandeur she doth feel impierce her frame,  
 Some felt majestic anguish, some high pain.  
 The stealing apprehension slowly spread  
 Over heaven's face. It pal'd the moon in heaven  
 And dark'd the heavenly mountain; while a sound  
 As universal, as if Nature there  
 Had found a tongue articulate with dread  
 A moan of lamentation shuddering  
 Swept the high snows. It took the sombre pines  
 And stirr'd a-tremble the sweet harebell hung  
 Upon the rock where sat almighty Power.  
 There ceas'd, there sank the wistful unison  
 Of sounds terrestrial, plaintively the robe  
 Once lifting from world-supplanted feet.  
 That prophet pleading of near-menac'd earth  
 Came as a goad to Iris and gave edge



# BOOK I

To those high fears of which her thoughts were full  
 Herë's sad message freighting her fair wings,  
 Therefore, although the Father's hand she saw  
 Lean'd strongly in a trance of thought profound,  
 Tense prop to meditation, though she mark'd  
 Athwart his musing face begin to drive  
 Shadows more black than were the pinewood glooms,  
 Though doubled these with umber the earth's fear,  
 Once more she mov'd towards him. She had cross'd  
 Embolden'd by the whole world's suppliant need  
 That cowering sward of silence and of flowers,  
 That yet betwixt her and the supreme high dread  
 With many a stretch'd forbidding bough yet flung  
 Interposition dreadful, when she felt  
 Wings other than her own, of richer peace  
 And more than rainbow freshness, shadowy risen,  
 Before her. 'Twas the world's sweet stiller, Sleep  
 Dark sentry of the sovereign thought, to guard  
 That brooding thunder-silence of the Highest  
 He had been standing, blent with the pine-dusk,  
 His countless plumes Lethæan garrison'd  
 With softness like so many wakeful ears  
 To warn away the least foot of approach  
 From the infinite lonely Power, musing apart,  
 Son of old Silence and primaeval Night,  
 His face it was, soft from the sleep-sunk orb  
 That Iris saw rise vaguely beautiful  
 Above her, rich with darkness, full of charm,  
 Steep'd in the starry hush that drownses all  
 Ere she was 'ware the will-benumbing God  
 Had caught her hand, and toward a neighbouring crag,  
 Oft looking back toward the Sovereign dread  
 With whispering fearfulness, as in a dream  
 Had led her. There beneath a spreading branch  
 That roof'd the sheer and dizzy waterfall:  
 'O what strange madness, Iris, brings thee back  
 Into the presence dread', thus he began  
 In dreamy whisper and sweet infant tone  
 That lulls the drowsing stillness, but which now  
 Awe-shook went faltering, of itself afraid,  
 'Here on the Thunderer's silence to intrude  
 For the fourth time. Three times I have beheld





## PERSEUS

Thee, bender of the million-colour'd bow,  
As though some lofty errand freighted thee,  
Come back again, and thy fair crimson mouth  
Ambrosial gate of utterance just ope,  
Thy lips half-parted froze in act to speak,  
Stay'd suddenly by the sublime aspect  
Of meditation, of austere high thought  
That furrow'd all the Father's mighty brow,  
Thou stood'st, thou stol'st, behind the neighbour crag.  
This torrent boulder-hung, where dark and straight  
One pine branch roofs the dizzy waterfall  
To that steep horror of adoring awe  
That seized thee shelter gave, and with its roar  
Befriending thy distraught confusion hid.  
Here breathless didst thou stand, this rib of rock  
Gripping for very dread and ecstasy  
To have beheld thus in its secret hour  
Worlds-puissance forging the august decree.  
Wisely didst thou determine to go back  
To the high power that sent thee. What moth-daze  
Of aspiration for the awful flame  
Brings thee once more within the Thunder's reach?  
He spoke ; and the rain-fresh ambassadress  
Of Herë's calm, she of the solemn bow :  
' Herë's great hest ; such deep anxiety  
As ploughs the queenly space 'twixt brow and brow  
Whose knit augustness arches with concern  
The universe. I tell thee, whispering Sleep.'



## BOOK II

In lonely grandeur at the board's head sat  
The mother of creation, Heaven's calm queen  
And wedlock's both. Superb in lordless state  
She uncompanion'd sat, with how bland smile  
Augustly set, on her part, to maintain  
At height of mirth the masterless high revel,  
The blissful holy banquet that not feeds  
Gods only, but with their glad powers refresh'd  
Strengthens in sleep the whole tir'd universe  
Set to be host and hostess, nevertheless  
How oft so e'er she might her grand head lift  
To bid immortals mend their drooping cheer,  
How oft so e'er with beaker to the brim  
Sparkling celestial wine bid Hebe go  
From throne to throne, yet ever her grave eye  
Anchor'd abstracted on the floor of Heaven ;  
Herself scarce banquet tasting ; while she grasp'd  
High up her golden staff pomegranate-topp'd,  
Revolving, as it seem'd with empress care  
How on the world the kingless hours might work  
That mothering care of hers the weal of things  
With regal aspect pondering. Thus all eve  
She sat absorb'd. Neither in her large eye  
Soften'd, nor on her brow's wide majesty  
Where heaven and earth are married, the grave frown  
Displeasure there had set, hurt queenly pride  
That Zeus came not, that he not shared with her,  
Daughter of Kronos and the half of sway,  
His secrecy of dread omnipotence.  
Couch, sceptre sharing not to yield the thoughts  
Of his austere sage mind,—profundity  
Self-counselled that forever broods apart.  
Large scheme she was revolving, plan benign,  
And with high aspect of maternal care  
For the wide bliss the endless weal of things  
A double golden marriage the world's queen  
Sat pondering. Not now, as oft she sits  
The peace of empires planning and of kings,



## PERSEUS

Now at the very hearthstone of all things  
 Hers and the Thunderer's household she planned,  
 August match-maker, to piece up the feud  
 That rends creation by the marriages  
 Of those two glorious strengths, her children fair  
 Whom to the supreme Strength life's Mother bore,  
 At her left hand they feasted side by side  
 Sister and brother, cheek softest in heaven,  
 Her daughter, fadeless Hebe, the fresh bloom  
 In sky and sea and gods, eternal youth  
 (But o'er earth her strong glory glints and goes)  
 Hebe, unwithering youth, daughter of Zeus  
 And sovereign Herë who preserves heaven's face  
 From wrinkles in eternal freshness young.  
 Cheerer and heartener after mightiest toils  
 From throne to throne she went with rosy hand  
 Serving the gods. From every dancing cup  
 Of nectar pour'd, from each delicious cate  
 Ambrosia offer'd, youth from her distill'd,  
 Shed from her ageless fingers, while she serv'd.  
 But in his seat where feasted her brother large,  
 Great Herë's puissant son, the violence,  
 The strength that breaks realms, irresistible  
 Tower-shattering Ares, spoiler of the slain,  
 Him in her careful mind she had long since  
 Affianc'd deep, when first in that sweet isle  
 By sunset's marge, where dwelt the Aithiopes,  
 The immortals' blameless peers, she had beheld  
 And wonderingly admired and perfect found  
 The daughter of Cepheus, fair Andromeda,  
 Andromeda the matchless, whose dear hand  
 None of the Gods unwedded yet in Heaven  
 But yearn'd to have, and each the Father pray'd  
 To make of her a goddess and his own.  
 Not only pride in this great rivalry  
 That her bright terrible offspring, War, might win,  
 But reasons deep of friendship weigh'd with her,  
 For that the bride's mother her dear friend was,  
 Her bosom friend, the queen star-diadem'd  
 Cassiopeia. Means in her sage mind  
 She sought this night to haste the bridal on  
 Upon her severe lip a sweet smile came



## BOOK II

Not timorous to linger, flattering her  
 With what harmonious match she, wedlock's queen,  
 Should through the tenderest sweetest daughter-in-law,  
 No goddess, but tear-stain'd mortality  
 Wean from his slaughterous thoughts unsparing War:  
 Let but the Father come. Yet momentarily  
 Battle's impetuosity she fear'd  
 Her son's rash dangerous nature, lest some freak  
 Some mere wild whim, some fiery caprice  
 Should stir forth even at this still starlit hour  
 Forth from the blissful revel, ere Zeus came  
 Mad, slaughtering senseless Ares. Little then  
 Could she, though with divine authority  
 Empress and mother or she, with grave calm brow  
 The floodtide and the fury of war hem back,  
 With youth's gay smile, his sister, powers most kin  
 In blood to him. For on his other side  
 Of soul more kindred to him than the strong  
 Fresh bloom of things or wedlock's sanctity  
 Beautiful burning Aphrodite sat,  
 The beckon and the lure of his fierce thoughts  
 Whose bright cheek sets his dangerous blood on fire  
 Creation's ceaseless goad, who with the might  
 Of generation twins his murderous strength.  
 He in her step must follow, she in his  
 Through that affinity impos'd on them  
 In the beginning by the fiat of things,  
 Or Zeus,—the magnet she, he the hard iron.  
 When Herë's searching look fell upon her  
 The feasting soul of Beauty, as she sat  
 By her large son, most laughter-fraught, it seemed  
 To dazzle and to capture, in her mood  
 Most flashing sweet and heart-alluring charm.  
 And when from her fair face wandering her gaze  
 Anchor'd upon her rash and glorious boy,  
 She sigh'd and turned away with perplex'd heart  
 Shuddering to auger towers and temples burnt  
 Hearths desolate, the weight of the world's care  
 On her majestic mind mother of things  
 More hugely press'd, her mind that over all  
 Broods bosoming creation's littleness.  
 That mark'd with wondering awe another power,



## PERSEUS

She, too, sister of Zeus, daughter she, too,  
 Of Kronos, though of Rhea younger born,  
 Whom the chaste eyes, the veiled glory that queens  
 Heaven's sanctity most holy and the couch  
 Of the Supreme, best loves, and most to her  
 Confides her secret soul, the vestal might  
 Of Hestia, the seated virgin Calm,  
 Sleepless cold watcher of the burning hearth  
 Who feeds the eternal flame. She forward lean'd,  
 And while in hush'd attention every head  
 In Heaven was turn'd to hear the Muses sing,  
 Still keeping with one hand her modest veil  
 Over her pale cheek's holy pudency.  
 She in the ear of Herë whisper'd sweet:  
 'Queen, dearest of my sisters, say, what broods  
 On thy majestic mind, mother of things?  
 Hear'st thou what 'throes of music's broken heart  
 Come dusking, shivering from Apollo's lyre,  
 Or hear'st thou not, griev'd haply to the soul  
 At this long wonder'd absence of thy lord  
 That he should leave thee thus uncountenanc'd  
 To sit, and in sole state hostess the pomp  
 Of Heaven's unlorded banquet. Why even now  
 He comes not to conclude the blissful revel  
 And to thy starry chamber thee, his spouse,  
 Thee, Herë, ever nubile, ever young  
 Maiden each morn lead, to thy golden couch.  
 There he with thee, eternal puissance male  
 With feminine, joined in blest union, keeps  
 The keys of offspring, and the holy pact  
 Which is thy dear peculiar privilege,  
 Marriage, the cause that makes, in one pure kiss  
 Perpetual, heaven with earth forever meet,—  
 Marriage, the ring whose reconciling charm  
 Joins things most hostile, yea, weds life to death  
 With progeny. How many severances  
 From bed and board, how many household faiths  
 From this night broken, what divorce of hearts  
 If Zeus come not, shall spring from this one night  
 Of severance 'twixt you twain, who knit the world.  
 And in the loss of your bed's harmony,  
 In gap of your parental, curbing wills



## BOOK II

Shall thy son, Herë, thy rebellious son,  
 Whose dreadful thoughts are but on death and war  
 On battle and destruction, headlong leap.  
 So in the ear of heaven's queen Hestia ;  
 To which with a knit brow majestic, she,  
 In accents of a sage perplexity  
 Yet breathing power, to Hestia replied :  
 ' Thus ever to lone pomp, daughter of Kronos  
 Committed and sad anxious thoughts behold  
 The brooding care of creatures! Thou hast hit  
 The very core of all my vast concern  
 To my cost earth's sad empress, to my cost  
 Mother of life. Yet, sister though alarmed  
 Thou see me for the earth-frailty, forc'd to brood  
 To shield the breathing innocence of bloom  
 And in its very cradle now safeguard  
 Creation, harbour not so wild a fear  
 Touching my violent son. I have seen all ;  
 What slaughterous and hearth-staining battle he  
 My headstrong Ares leads against the land  
 Sacred to me of all the lands of earth,  
 The imperial Argive realm ; and for the peril  
 That presses have devised a remedy,  
 Now for the present at least. Thou shalt not see  
 My capital, tower'd glory of the strength  
 Of my majestic laws, to-night at least  
 Crash down in ruin ;—the place where I long since  
 Confided unto righteous Inachus  
 (And thou, too, queen, at the first lighted hearth)  
 Rejoicing in its kinship of soul-blaze  
 It's clear chaste light that round the hearth-stone plays  
 The purer half of rash Prometheus theft  
 Its hovering hope, its beauty, its chaste play  
 Of aspiration and its burning cleanse,  
 (Forge-hammering Hephaestus seized its rage  
 Red-hot and smokier use). And there too Zeus,  
 To that priest-king wise, pious, just, austere  
 Zeus, whose far glance sees in the stock the seed  
 Swore the wide promise of Pelasgian sway  
 And Hellas yet to be. That soil of fate  
 That temple of my worshipp'd sanctities  
 I have with careful forethought fenc'd from harm



## PERSEUS

I have means taken with the Sleep-God's aid  
 To trance this towering ascent of sails  
 Toward Argos rock'd upon a foamless heave.  
 From heaven's sheer golden threshold thou mayst see  
 Far down upon the moonlit sea becalm'd  
 All that swanflock of sea wings towering on  
 Rock aimlessly, that mighty armament  
 Which my son leads. And if his dangerous blood  
 Thou fearest, lest some fiery caprice  
 Should stir him forth even at this starlit hour  
 For that, too, Hestia I have tak'n thought.  
 I have charg'd Hebe soul of gaiety  
 From her blithe task of brimming heaven's blest mirth  
 Early to her young seat by Ares' side ;  
 Aggriev'd, she too, at Ares that he goes  
 So lightly through her garden of tall youth  
 Mowing the plant it cost such pains to rear  
 She hath promis'd me to stay him all this night  
 With feast and talk, and her delightful task  
 To Ganymedes leaving him to ply  
 Cup after cup with heaven's heart-easing wine  
 With nectarous earth-oblivion quench his fire,  
 All his large strength relax to joyous thought.  
 And long ere this she should have tak'n her throne  
 But for this new unusual need arisen  
 More than on other nights this night to cheer  
 The gloom that still through bursts of quenchless revel  
 Goes clouding all the high feast of the Gods.  
 The cause, their mighty Father's absence strange  
 For whose prolong'd inexplicable stay  
 This other graver object of thy fear  
 I cannot so well re-assure thy spirit,  
 My sister, being in my own sad soul  
 Too much perturb'd when I his going saw  
 Even to have mark'd which way the step of Power  
 Went, upon what vast business of the night  
 Or operation of the o'erlook'd orb  
 As to forsake heaven's glorious feast that feeds  
 Creation or for one night even abstain  
 From wedded Herë's world-espousing arms  
 The sacrosanct enclaspment that each eve  
 Weds and relumes the day-jarr'd universe.



## BOOK II

Much more than severances of bed and board  
When, I saw that, my shuddering soul inferr'd  
Warn'd whisperingly beforehand as I was  
In dreams, my Hestia, vision's of the night.  
As she spoke thus, to that pale queen it seem'd  
She shiver'd ; for through all her blessed frame  
The substance and the mould of majesty  
Down from the shoulders queenly slope it ran  
That quick spasm, over the ambrosial swell  
Of breasts that are the pillow of all power  
The cradle rocked upon whose heave the world  
From her ruth drinks the very milk of rest.  
She trembled with remembrance! she whose will  
Was empress with a nod or to enthrone  
Or to dethrone each night Night's solemn sway  
Of darkness, yea more puissant than day break  
To bid Night fly with every frighten'd Dream.  
Which seeing incredulous, the modest cheek  
The veil'd Glory that sits by the hearth-fire  
Calm of households, their dreaded purity  
Answered: 'What dream so dark, mistress of things?  
Or could dreams shake the sane sagacity  
Of that firm regal bosom strong to queen  
The swell of its emotion and the world.'  
And the grave elder Goddess: 'Dost thou doubt?  
Dost thou doubt it, my sister? Ah, they can!  
More powerful from the very tenderness  
Of this all-mothering heart they know so well  
Thou, sitting by the hearth-fire's peaceful glow  
Know'st not, perchance, how still our Titan sires  
Since Nemesis unto the shade of things,  
So mighty once, a ghostly puissance gives,  
Still from the fathomless earth-deeps have power  
To trouble and afflict us. Oft in dreams  
In visions of the night, when sleep o'erclouds  
Immortal reason's vigour, they assume  
Power to breathe up vague forms of phantom ill.  
Woe prophesying from the nether deeps  
To us and to our empire won from them  
To daunt and quail whate'er of frailty then  
Remembering dim ancient injured Gods,  
Lurks in our minds sleep-sunken after toils



## PERSEUS

After beneficent and mighty toils  
Spent, overtask'd. From such a dream last night  
Of more than usual horror I awoke,  
Vast wrathful faces of the elder Gods  
Were limn'd for me: my father Kronos first  
Gray king of crooked counsels, on whose knee  
I sat, a child, and with his mighty beard  
Play'd infantine, unconscious. Then the rest  
Krios, Eurybia, spent Hyperion  
And moonless Thea, and Iapetus.  
These pass'd and then a dreadful finger seen  
Phantasmal, thrice reiterating loss  
Hateful infringement, hideous robbery  
That pang, the bitterest that could bereave  
My spirit. For the dragon-guarded tree  
They show'd, in my wild garden of the West,  
Reft of the gold fruit virgin-sentinell'd,—  
My very breasts of beauty and of love  
My fruit world-mothering in virgin vale  
Hesperian; which were they cast in wrath  
By the earth-mother on the festal board,  
Then at the sweet espousals that made Heaven  
With earthly things in holiest marriage one  
They had not been to line this ample brow  
That mothers since creation, a worse fount  
Of trouble or a more incessant thorn:  
The golden care on whose safe-custody  
So perilously rests the holy pact  
Which life ensures, and seals twixt womb and tomb  
That solemn-oath'd perpetual covenant,  
Sworn to forever in earth, sea and sky  
When Zeus me wed, and over Hell's dark charm  
Hung bloom ambrosial to bring back from death  
Souls to my solemn garden: where I train  
In my great laws and thine, the hearth-fire's bliss,  
The weal of states and cities and the calm  
Of empires all futurity unborn.  
What think'st then, Hestia? Have I not cause  
To fear the worst, if my dreams any truth  
Hold, and if now (I tremble at the thought)  
Those vales Hesperidean, heavenly slopes  
Whose flowers are souls, great virtues unborn school



## BOOK II

History's womb, should of my mothering gold  
 Indeed be reft, shorn, orphan'd of the gleam  
 The sunward lifting radiance at whose touch,  
 Bursting the seeds of their fall'n virtuous acts,  
 Hous'd darkly in oblivion, the dead  
 Remember and the wings of yearning fledge  
 And leaf and flower into the light again.  
 O garden of the germinating bliss of God!  
 Blest training-ground deep-soldier'd with the strength  
 And purpose of the Highest! how art thou  
 Arrested, if no more Herë's gold fruit,  
 Rain courage from the tree life-mothering!  
 Glades of fair heroines, one stirless sword  
 Of lilies, and the rocks of heroes dim  
 Paus'd, statued tombstones of themselves?  
 So plain'd impassion'd Herë, and sat dumb  
 In that exclaim. From wonder scarcely then  
 Drawing deep breath, the vestal Calm divine:  
 'A dreadful dream indeed thou hast dream'd, Queen!  
 Vision portentous! But how sayst thou then?  
 From thy soul's fear majestic how dost thou  
 Like monarch-shaking apprehension draw  
 In this stupendous reverie, though strange,  
 That led the world's great Father thus to seek  
 His sheer earth-prospect, and on that lone rock  
 Enchair himself, where overhead tall pines  
 Brood, and all round the hoar down-bearding streams  
 Add gravity more ancient to increase  
 The lonely and thought-aiding mountain-peace  
 Art thou so sure, bosom that cradlest all  
 Thy strange dream, dream so wildly fanciful  
 Not falsely from the ivory-gate proceeds?'  
 'No, sister, no!' answered with emphasis,  
 Augustly sad, the world's sigh-shaken queen:  
 'Never so real, never image fraught  
 With more of truthful presage and dismay  
 The Dream-powers issued from the gates of dream  
 The horn-gate, not the ivory. With my eyes  
 Wide open shook, by the fierce vision stung  
 From slumber I beheld in their own shape  
 The Gods of dream. And with ears wide awake  
 I overheard their whisper'd conference dark



## PERSEUS

'Twas the still hour, the third watch of her vigil  
 When pointing her dark sceptre ancient Night  
 Bids roll the solemn sparkling sleeplessness  
 To sink in seas down-cadent, that I sprang  
 Thus shuddering from my golden couch and stood  
 Thrilling upright astonish'd in the gloom.  
 I look'd round. What was my alarm to find  
 The sacred couch whence holy marriage is,  
 My couch ambrosial, bond of nuptial hearts  
 Of my dread consort, Power-abandonèd  
 He, too, had augur'd then, as I had dream'd!  
 All round that blissful chamber, innermost  
 In Heaven, my holy and secluded bower  
 Where I, erewhile those children of his might  
 Bore to him, Ares, his tower-shattering son  
 And, fadelessly immortal, Hebe fresh,  
 I looked to find the supreme Strength, my lord  
 And thunder's ; nowhere could I see his face.  
 I only saw, slumbering at either side  
 Of the high doors of marriage those two powers  
 Who are in heaven my beauteous chamberlins  
 On earth the servants of my acted will  
 He of the saffron veil who still precedes  
 The bridal pomp and hail'd processional  
 With shout of Hymenaeus shakes the torch  
 And she my own strong child, so arm'd with pangs  
 For women, yet to aid so arm'd with ease  
 Betwixt whose hands men wail into the world  
 Shrill summon'd Ilithyia, Nature's nurse.  
 Softly they breath'd, droop shoulder'd and relax'd,  
 And near them suddenly I was aware  
 Of the Dream-Gods together in close talk  
 Standing beyond without the golden doors  
 There in my heavenly garden, the foreclose  
 To my immaculate bower, where breathing lay  
 In blooming slumber that renews the world  
 Hebe, the deity of youth, a flower  
 'Mid fadeless flowers. They stood gazing on her,  
 Dusk presences like to no shapes of Heaven  
 Rude formless forms of the primaeval Dark.  
 Thou know'st them well, the sculptor Morpheus first  
 Whose dark strength and creative force shapes dreams



## BOOK II

And near him the vague craftsman of the dark  
 Whose pencil in deception dipped, with life  
 Grips dreamers hearts, with poignancy of truth  
 Fatal conviction that shoes ruin's foot  
 And oft itself paves on catastrophe.  
 Phobeter last, the horror in the night  
 Foul king of the nightmare and legion'd fears ;  
 In clammy sweat he bathes the murderer's brow  
 Ghasts with wild shapes poor madness' frenzied eye,  
 In sleeping sin probes conscience to the quick.  
 Close whispering in one another's ear  
 I heard them, Hestia, and what mad plot  
 They plotted, those wild architects of dream,  
 Lawless imaginations of the dark,  
 Night's shapeless children leagued with ancient Night  
 In that foul robbery of my fair fruit.  
 They planned the glorious beckon of the life  
 Of beauty gone, more hugely to release  
 Their function's each, curb-fretted with this rein,  
 This purpose, this sane harmony of Zeus :  
 In high hope, loos'd a riot of wild shapes  
 Reinless to people and Night's recover'd reign.  
 Three of them stood and whispered their dark joy,  
 On empress eyelids glorying to have laid  
 The dreadful dream: when Morpheus from that sight  
 Youth amid fadeless flowers impregnable,  
 Embower'd and hurtless Hebe, thus broke in :  
 "Fools, booty first and boasting afterward!  
 Do not vaunt yet to have shunn'd the scrutiny  
 And sword-flash of the queenliest eye in Heaven.  
 Have ye forgot amongst what perils we move  
 Here in the capital and court of day,  
 Kronion's sheeny palace, bright though tranc'd  
 In drowsyhead. Scarcely have we come through  
 The daunting splendour and the dreadful sheen  
 Thin wavering dreams. Quick to our closing task!"  
 So spake, nodding grim down the marshal god  
 And vanguard of illusion. But the rest  
 Demurring stood, and now on Hebe gaz'd,  
 Now at each other ; fearing as it seem'd  
 To lay hands on the world's fresh laughing bloom  
 Whose beauty, pined with thwarted fierce desire



## PERSEUS

They from the rear of routed darkness see  
 The challenge and the mockery of the dark  
 Day's hope and morning's rally. Thus they stood  
 Tormented and inflam'd, twixt fear and hope  
 In blank awe hesitating,—feature-writh'd  
 Vague forms of midnight and the mind's misrule  
 Then he that likeneth dreams to the fear'd truth  
 While fearfully his visage ap'd the act  
 At which he strain'd: "Morpheus a prize indeed  
 Were she who here lies sleeping! But thyself  
 Think on the peril. Not to speak of heaven's queen,  
 The half of sway, how shall her outcry, seized,  
 Wake these two powers of day that slumber here  
 Porch-guarding Herë's chamber. With his torch  
 Toss'd in our faces shall not Hymen leap  
 Upon us, and with sun-enriching hands  
 Birth-mighty Ilithyia. Thousands of eyes  
 Besides, that Reason serve and sentinel  
 The doors of the eternal harmony,  
 In these flowers shut, these leaves, these whispering walls  
 Droop but the lid ready at our least noise  
 Their riddling shot and archery of looks  
 To open on us and alarm all heaven."  
 So Ikelos spoke fearing; and to him  
 The captain Dusk: "Thou rather with thy prate  
 Wilt rouse, I see, the Olympian on his peak  
 Slow-pausing brooder upon action's brink,  
 Slack hurler of steep-crashing thunder bolts.  
 Shall she lie here, the eye-sore of the dark  
 Heartener of day against the dreamy strength  
 Of our dessimulation? In vain then  
 Shall we have thiev'd those apples, corner-stone  
 Of God's sane calm, the casket and the key  
 Of marriage, heaven's supporting harmony  
 Save she be ours, Youth, marriage-issued Youth  
 The daughter of the mother, whose young bloom  
 Renews the world. I tell thee, Ikelos,  
 'Tis her face that preserves heaven's lordly face  
 From wrinkles in perennial freshness young  
 And though Earth lie beneath the hoary curse  
 Of tristful Kronos, winter, age and death,  
 Her cheek we see in the returning rose



## BOOK II

And the reviving lily. 'Tis her bloom  
 That goes so rosy with veil'd face to wed  
 Prolific pangs ; hers the heroic strength  
 Of delectable youth, which glows to rush  
 On battle, and from hardest toils wrings cheer.  
 'Tis she, too, breathes that rally of all life  
 Wintering with deep Persephone, which bursts  
 The prisoning sod,—rally of mortal things  
 To reascend Oblivion and once more  
 Enter athletic on the strife superb  
 The cosmic wrestle toward the wreath to be  
 So upon earth she works, but high in Heaven  
 Serves in her Father's glorious banquet-hall,  
 Ministering nectar, the glad wine of Gods,  
 Cheerer of heavenly toils, and their blest food  
 Ambrosia, serves out, the food of heaven,  
 With virgin hands going from throne to throne  
 Unwedded yet: Whether the Thunderer fears  
 Loss to her freshness of immortal bloom  
 If she should wed, or her austere keeps  
 Long choosing that heroic son-in-law.  
 At least whate'er his shrouded will may hide  
 He with an oath-world-shaking did pronounce  
 The curse that is her sentry, impotence  
 And malady of palsy shaken limbs  
 To the rash power immortal that shall loose  
 Her zone of youth, and from the face of things  
 Brush off the bloom of freshness wedding her.  
 That guerdon for a mortal he reserves,  
 Some patient, strong, much-toiling demigod.  
 But what say ye, my brethren: shall this be  
 And not rather in Night's recover'd reign  
 Her progeny, Eld carking Care and Death  
 To us the demons of the dark, resign  
 The Thunderer's bloomy child, dis-Hebed quite?"  
 He leer'd with rolling eye, Phobeter's face  
 Interrogating: who thus scowling said:  
 "Away with her! Annihilate the charm  
 That makes eternal azure, the fresh day!  
 To hideousness consign that cheek of Spring.  
 Make havoc of those fingers like to flowers  
 That pour for the Olympians all to drink!



## PERSEUS

Hope and fresh and heart! stop the all-streaming fount  
Of nectar, and confound ambrosia!  
To darkness with her! To the shades of dream!"  
As he spoke thus, and cheer'd his brothers on,  
From the starr'd hush above them Night profound  
Her mighty whisper added, emphasis  
Imparting and the solemn weight of speech  
Her own majestic accents to his word:  
"Haste now or hope relinquish, powers of dream."  
These syllables breath'd over whispering trees  
As 'twere the soul of darkness shap'd to sound  
Came murmuring. They heard, Night's phantom sons:  
A sighting joy was in Phobetor's face;  
The others swelled with murk remembering rage.  
Towards her with drench-slumberous approach  
On came the towering phantasms obscure  
A drowsier charm weigh'd down the unwithering grass  
And the dream-footed touch of their footfalls  
Made stiller the droop-headed garden flowers.  
When they reached her, down stoop'd that formless dread  
Night's frightening horror, and down-stoop'd as well  
His brothers uncouth. In an instant they had  
Caught on the dreamy dark of their wings up  
Mine and the Thunderer's darling and the world's,  
Had I not, at that moment horror-seized  
Cried out at them, and with my sceptre shook  
Frighten'd those phantom frighteners to run.  
Their shades, shot through with radiance, glibbering  
Fleeing for cover back to Night's dusk robe.  
Art thou pale, Hestia? What thinkest now?  
For orb-wide apprehension was not here  
Matter enough to quail the queen of things.  
All night I sat in deep thought pondering  
Irk'd, tarrying the Thunderer's wish'd return,  
Back from his sudden absence, both the cause  
Of that, and my dream's dark significance  
To enquire of him, at wisdoms slakeless fount  
Consulting, to safeguard this menac'd scheme.  
Wouldst thou believe it? not for a moment even  
Could I such privacy of conference deep  
As the hour asks, though for this orb of things  
What any queen of her consort obtains,





## BOOK II

Get from his settled musing world withdrawn  
Though all day eye-solicited, nor once  
Attract toward me his divine deep glance  
From the large penthouse of majestic lids  
That dream above the subject universe  
Upon me to dawn azure. Until eve  
I tarried, but at evening thou beheld'st  
How he pass'd by our scarce-believing eyes  
Left hostless hospitality and Heaven  
Deserted of his splendour, yea, the whole  
Mysterious golden revel meaningless.  
I am determin'd, Hestia, I have now  
Bent up my mind to act without him sever'd  
From his omnipotence, take my own course  
He shall no more his sister and his spouse  
Flout and affront, and in a vast disdain  
With me, the world's mild wisdom feminine,  
To share the abyss of his sole-brooding mind  
Imperil to boot the both-ways-orphan'd world  
Which it behoves me slumbering at the least  
To mother. I have sent fleet Iris wing'd  
With the plume-weighting burden of my dread  
His deep ear to petition, and request  
From his lone meditation high and deep  
Back to heaven's lordless banquet to return.  
If he refuse, delaying on his peak  
'Tis mine to put my own benignant plan  
Unsanction'd of him to immediate act,  
And with my wisdom fence the universe.'  
With a majestic energy she grasp'd  
Her sceptre, as she ceased upon that word  
While on her ample forehead it would seem  
The glorious space 'twixt either dreaming brow  
That arch with their concern the universe  
Sat, unparticipated, the wide care,  
Of all the world at once. To her 'twixt dread  
And admiration of her breathing power,  
Aw'd by her force, the meek tranquility  
Of households: 'A shrewd scheme thou overheard'st  
Yet O, bethink thee, sister! It may be  
It may well be, that with a plot profound  
And deeper than thou thinkest, the dream power



## PERSEUS

Came with that dream world-menacing, and showed,  
 Offer of such rude violence ; to deceive,  
 Sky empress, thee, and with thee all the gods  
 In hope that ye, with rumour's tongue raw hurt  
 And rashly aidless of omnipotence  
 May fly to act. And wilt thou, sister sweet,  
 Gauge by the strength of such fear feminine  
 As pierces thy sad bosom, the built peace  
 Of measureless and all creative might  
 The mystery of the world's well-married calm.  
 Though absent from the dawn revirgined breast  
 Thine, ever nubile Herë, Zeus should leave  
 For three nights even in fresh knot unrenewed  
 The solemn contract and world clasp of things  
 Not so shall the soul-separating dawn  
 No, nor the loveless conflict, the huge strife  
 Of day, with action the torn universe  
 Rend to a broil irreconcilable.

Am I not here at the pure home of things  
 The hearth-glow of life's peace, to heal what jars  
 Betwixt you, I and those world-founding powers  
 August Themis and righteous Nemesis?  
 Nay, and think not that the tir'd world shall go  
 Unstrengthened, without sustenance, if he  
 Whose hourly passion nourishes the sun  
 And with his every thought creation feeds  
 Partake not at the board's head heaven's high revel  
 For lack of which we were one strengthless need,  
 We other powers. But say, mother of things  
 What plan beneficent is this thou brood'st?'  
 She spoke and lifted up, grave tranquil eyes  
 Toward Herë, who in blander tone replied:  
 'What other scheme benignant but even that  
 I have committed to the treasury  
 Of thy bosom, sweet sharer of my thoughts,  
 To thy divine breast's holy secrecy  
 That long since plann'd, that cherish'd dream of mine  
 Cherish'd so long, remember'st thou to be  
 No more a dream, which now this very night  
 I mean at last to carry into act  
 Bring to the plann'd fruition of my hope.  
 To-night! no lingering: with the Thunderer's will



## BOOK II

If not, without. For the world's sake not now  
 The peace of empire's planning and of realms  
 Now at the centre and hearthstone of things  
 The supreme Father's household I design  
 Sovereign match-maker, to piece up the feud  
 That rends creation by the marriages  
 Of our two glorious children: he who was  
 Even now the anxious theme of our sad talk  
 Tower-shattering Ares turbulent, and she  
 My strange dream menaces and the dream-powers  
 In their shape seen. Him in my careful thought  
 I have long since affianc'd, as thou know'st  
 When first I saw and wonderingly admir'd  
 In that sweet isle by sunset's marge, where dwell  
 The immortals' flameless peers, Andromeda  
 Cepheus' fair daughter, matchless among maids  
 My nursling, whom I nurs'd on my own breast  
 For love of her sage mother, my dear friend,  
 My bosom-friend, the queen star-diadem'd  
 Cassiopeia. And thou, sister, then  
 Thy mighty sacrosanct approval gav'st  
 When I confided to thee that project  
 My son's alliance with a mortal maid,  
 No goddess, but tear-stain'd mortality,  
 Harmonious match, by which I, wedlock's queen  
 Shall, through the tenderest noblest thing alive  
 Wean from his slaughterous thoughts unsparing War  
 Thou thy consent gav'st, seeing as thou didst  
 How it would serve thy hush'd tranquility  
 Of coldness and of calm and my boon ends  
 Further yet more, the hatred-healing ends  
 Of marriage, since betrothing earth to heaven  
 With a last tightening rivet, soldering charm.  
 'Twill deepen this pure kiss of sky and sea,  
 If my fierce son by such means we could part  
 From burning Cytherea. She it is,  
 Creation's co-sprung bane, look, how she leans,  
 See'st thou? toward Ares throne with laughing eyes  
 Her fair looks flaming on him, who misleads  
 His blind strength after her, in her thick field  
 And harvest of earth-populating steps  
 Ever to go a-slaying, blind as she!



## PERSEUS

Beauty, whose fought for shadow fills the world  
 And stings to strife all creatures 'neath the sun.  
 I tell thee, not to help birth's holy task  
 With easeful Ilithya she hath set  
 Her mind,—on death and on destruction bent  
 Could she be other, born of the barren foam?  
 Strangely from the all-swallowing vastness sprung  
 Think, Hestia. However the sage power  
 Not without my bland wisdom hath upbuilt  
 This glorious harmony and pact of things  
 This noble dream, yet have we not avail'd  
 Devising, labouring though with strength ek'd out  
 By all this glorious family of gods,  
 Wise goddesses and strong laborious gods,  
 To medicine quite the ancient ail of things  
 So old, it seems bred into nature's bone  
 Inveterate ill. I mean the sever'd strength  
 And frailty of the might of Uranus  
 That stream'd together when the Cyprian queen  
 Sprung vengeful from the blood of her maim'd sire,  
 From that red seethe of ocean, and with her  
 His frailty ; all that spilt blood's atom life  
 This struggling fratricide of mortal things,  
 Strife, flowering still, from Kronos' ancient crime  
 And from contact with Herpe, primal iron,  
 Touch'd into cruelty. And still it flowers  
 And reddens up beneath suppression sweet  
 And mitigation of the knot supreme ;  
 Marriage the band on all things Zeus and I  
 Together tied. She, she is the prime cause  
 The Idalean, burning to avenge on us,  
 And Earth's wide fertile breasts, that fram'd the blow  
 The crime of our great father, she and Zeus,  
 His folly, his unwisdom strange, who still  
 This friendship of two such most unlike powers  
 Indulges ; no affinity on them,  
 Dark steely strength and beauty burning fair,  
 In the beginning by the fiat of things  
 Impos'd, that they together thus should go  
 Lured on, the magnet she, he the hard iron.  
 At least a mightier attraction now  
 I have discover'd in this Aithiop maid



## BOOK II

Gifted and dower'd with every perfect gift  
 By goddesses immortal, as she is,  
 With beauty of mind ennobled from the touch  
 Of our companionship, through oft converse  
 With heavenly minds, when at the banquets blest  
 We mix with those fair mortals like to flowers  
 Foam-wash'd and flawless by the setting sun.  
 Already, Hestia, though but a girl  
 She, in her sheer nobility of soul  
 Fires every power in heaven, unwedded yet,  
 They flame in rivalry for her dear hand.  
 Each yearns for her, and each the father prays  
 To make of her a goddess and his bride.  
 Dusk holy Leto and cold Artemis  
 Burning Apollo in the knot would bind  
 Of her cool clasping innocence and truth  
 That she from Daphne's fadeless memory  
 May save his slakeless sorrow, in pursuit  
 Of still eluding beauty, ever stung.  
 And with like reason Maia for her son  
 And such a daughter-in-law the Cyprian seeks  
 Only to stint the random archery  
 Of her wing'd stripling, Eros, whose tall youth  
 Makes havoc here in heaven, nor spares, herself  
 Although it doth behove me, patroness  
 Of marriage, and with me its flaming torch  
 Who tosses, and fresh Hebe bloom of things  
 And thee, my Hestia, wisely with due weight  
 Given to each, all these conflicting claims  
 To balance and consider. Yet ourselves  
 Being in this contest of Goddesses  
 Mainly concerned, I have more fittingly  
 As I deem, to the mother of the maid  
 Fair Cassiopeia, for judgement referr'd,  
 As most herself in her child's marriage touch'd,  
 An involv'd party far more than we all.  
 She, what more natural? the honour weighing,  
 Glory that her triumphant spirit acclaims  
 Advantage rich, her child, a mortal maid  
 From such a match would reap, as to be call'd  
 Mine and the Thunderer's daughter-in-law, at last  
 For Ares hath her judgement given, o'er-rid



## PERSEUS

Her husband the good Cepheus who demurs,  
 A man preferring, Pheneus, his near kin,  
 Fearing such high alliance as too grand,  
 Too steeply near to the sheer brink of Power.  
 So now upon the sealing fiat rests  
 For doom and for decision the affair  
 On him, my froward consort, who shrouds up  
 Ever in mystery his approachless will,  
 On that plea of the world's deep-sighted weal  
 Which but his sapience can fathom, known  
 But to himself, and never so well pleased  
 Would it not seem, my sister, with himself  
 Never so satisfied as when my will  
 He crosses. But the thwart oppugnancy  
 And harshness of his unconceding mind  
 Over his own dread power ever a-brood  
 I, sister, have a sure means and sweet  
 Found to conciliate, yea, with wisdom bland  
 And wifely win entirely to my will.  
 It is this other scheme I ponder deep  
 My daughter's bridal, my Hebe's, how best  
 Youth's loveliness, force, freshness to admit  
 Into the large affiancy of things  
 Nor brushing from her that sweet virgin bloom  
 With yet a further rivet make more fast  
 Nature's deep bond, the sovereign knot of all  
 Mine and the Thunderer's union. Needs must he  
 Who shall dare wed with fresh immortal youth  
 A mortal be, even as the Gods of dream  
 Ere they such violence plann'd, truly surmis'd  
 Howe'er they came to know of it, a man  
 No joyousness celestial, no such fire  
 Of deathless and ungrieving deity  
 Unzoning her to take the early streak  
 From the day-dawn, from every running spring  
 Its bubbling purity, and spoil the grace  
 Of that first delicate and opening bloom  
 In bud or boy or maiden. And know'st thou  
 Who 'tis I mean my Hebe shall espouse  
 What man, what toiling demigod of those  
 The sport of my rich anger, whom I scourge  
 With sore affliction in my jealousy.



## BOOK II

I, the benignant mighty mother of earth,  
 Wrathful for that, from mortal women fram'd  
 By the dread sleepless all-creative power,  
 They his false-forg'd forceful weapons are  
 To wound with deeds my soft earth-cradling peace  
 And wake to fretful consciousness, my babe,  
 Creation, from sleep-dandled indolence.  
 She spake, and straight was silent: for a wave  
 For a majestic access of such pain  
 As stirs the deeps of her large feminine  
 World-mothering emotion, swept just then,  
 Across the serene sanctity of brows  
 Where heaven and earth are married. Mute she sat.  
 As for the hearth-fire's veil'd and vestal queen  
 A hush of holy wonder and deep love  
 Fond awful admiration tranced a-while  
 Her tongue, till she at last drew breath, and said:  
 'I marvel at the fresh rich plenitude  
 Of thy large generous nature, queen of things,  
 The deep capacity of thy world-ruth  
 And suffering forgiveness. Canst thou bring  
 Thy heart to this, thy quivering injured heart  
 That thou wilt wed thy jocund daughter, Youth,  
 To one of these, the strong blood of the Highest?  
 His woman-born and power-begotten race  
 Of heroes, whom perfection, his fair dream,  
 The dim felt beauty of the world's far bliss  
 Impassions the World-lover to raise up  
 When time needs, captains of the march of things:  
 Hast thou not hitherto afflicted them  
 In thy most holy anger, being thy shame  
 In mere despite of thy majestic law  
 Sprung, as they are, of puissance law-uncurb'd  
 Sluiced from the random stealth of infinite Power  
 The sleepless might creative that o'erflows  
 On his own world enamour'd to produce?  
 O how can this thing be, nor with result  
 World-ruining that with Hebe should wed  
 One that is born a blush upon thy face  
 To stain the sacred source she issues from  
 Thee, Herë, and the ceremonious rite  
 The sweet curb that keeps fresh the world's pure bloom



## PERSEUS

And guards the virgin innocence of things?  
 To which Herë: 'Not magnanimity  
 But policy my sister; or if both  
 'Tis policy that foremost sways, what else  
 Is left me, whom his great power isolates?  
 Me, whom, alas! a folly sad sublime  
 In my divine fresh girlhood, my sweet youth,  
 Ah! would like thee I had remained a maid  
 Frank maidhood's unsuspecting guilelessness  
 Rather inexperience, woo'd by his large word  
 Fir'd to august ambition, sceptred first  
 And thron'd in lonely grandeur on this height  
 Of loveless, aching, ever-thwarted rule  
 To queen for him the anxious orb of things.  
 Let that go! A regret irrevocable  
 Boots not to cherish but empire maintain  
 Over myself, the rarer crown within  
 Making the meek ash and the smouldering glow  
 Of my resentment trampled out relume  
 The Thunderer's favour toward me. And 'tis thou  
 Must help me, Hestia, with thy pure voice  
 Seconding me, the large conceiv'd design  
 That shall make Ares' furious warfare break  
 Weak as a shattered wave upon the charm  
 Of this soul-melting maiden, nurs'd upon  
 My own high bosom, help thou to commend  
 To these that sit grave calm, great goddesses  
 Nearest the throne eternal they support  
 Wise Themis, mighty Nemesis, accord  
 Of whose strong grace not having, any plan  
 However sage, however fraught with boon  
 From the high nod that shakes the world receives  
 Ratification never. Their consent  
 First had to this, which shall go far to push  
 Among so many high contending claims  
 Ours to the front, I shall this other plan  
 This other holy bridal that shall bring  
 Such access to the world of health, strength, bloom  
 Propose, what hero shall fresh Hebe wed  
 His yet unspoken name prepare to hear.  
 Which in the shamefaced lowering of tones  
 Majestic and the gleam of one last tear,



## BOOK II

My secret, ye shall have, and your dear head  
 Leaning toward me, say if by such means  
 Such awful bending of my sanctity  
 Bowing low down my empress pride I may  
 Wind myself yet about the heart of Power  
 The please'd heart of Omnipotence. Turn then  
 On thy throne, do as I do, to confer  
 With these world-foundresses. To thee and them  
 I shall at large now open blissful things.'  
 So saying, full of those great bridals she  
 Turn'd on her glimmering throne, the queen of all  
 With a majestic gesture one grand arm  
 Over its back thrown gracefully. High up  
 With royal ease she in her right hand grasp'd  
 Her sceptre of dominion, symbol large  
 Of her sky-queendom both and motherhood  
 Of all things, with the fruit prolific crown'd  
 The crimson-grain'd pomegranate: perch'd on  
 By the black cuckoo, in whose mystic shape  
 Foreshadowing her fostering sweet care  
 Of earth's still ingrate and rebellious life  
 And his world-providence so lost to self  
 In fatherhood, in which shape the world's dread  
 Flutter'd into her bosom, Herë's breast  
 For shelter from his own too boundless power  
 She, holding that high sceptre cuckoo-crown'd  
 Turn'd, with the beckon of imperial eyes  
 To meek-thron'd Hestia to turn likewise  
 Toward those steadfast and columnar strengths  
 Beside them throned who the world's roots first laid  
 They like the still white sovereign mountain-tops  
 Of Himalaya or of Andes sat  
 Everest or Aconcagua—sat veil'd  
 Yet as those peaks, on some rare windy dawn  
 Or the moon-fill'd and winnow'd purity  
 Of some diaphanous evening after storm  
 Unveil and show, high up in heaven, their tops  
 To the surpris'd first comer ventur'd forth  
 Who stands gazing at that supreme miracle:  
 That virginal soft-awful dream of snow  
 So far away he trembles, lest they melt,  
 And vanish, those white candied pyramids



## PERSEUS

That ice-enchanted city's maiden towers,  
 Up, at that height suspended so 'twould seem  
 Sheer over cloud-land bas'd on floating cloud  
 Surrounded with a sea of vaporous cloud.  
 Not otherwise unto the wonder soft  
 The awe of Heaven's queen and of Hestia  
 Appear'd those elder glories of the world  
 Mild countenances awful with the weight  
 Of ever-new experience to old  
 Added, accumulating age on age  
 Out of the infinite and rainbow hue,  
 The liquid tremble of life's frail raindrop,  
 Flaking and settling into union,  
 Down into one white solid sheen, the strength,  
 The austere dazzling steadfastness of law:  
 Too dazzling and too awful for the eye  
 Of God or man to gaze forever on.  
 Therefore that tranquil depth of mystery  
 Inscrutable, their holy faces calm  
 They shroud at feast or at assembly still  
 In veils of vaporous muffling depth profound.  
 O what emotion strong could then have mov'd  
 Such goddesses to lift their folded hands  
 In marble quiet folded on their knees  
 And all their vast reserve blowing away  
 Unveil themselves as there they sat ; grave powers  
 Nearest the throne eternal they support  
 Stern Nemesis through whose defection first  
 With filial anger thrill'd for her maim'd sire  
 Zeus conquer'd : and by her that other strength  
 Sister, she too, of Kronos and as wise  
 To medicine the red act that budded Time  
 Law-giving Themis, who with Zeus first fram'd  
 The world's foundations and securely propp'd  
 On Atlas' neck her weak ethereal Sire?  
 A marvel never until now betid  
 At the blest banquet which, though veil'd, they heard  
 Through fold on fold of grand indifference calm.  
 'Twas that which led those goddesses, austere  
 Yet feminine, with their own eyes to see  
 Mov'd to a soft astonishment, the cause  
 Of the strange silence ever and anon



## BOOK II

The gloom, that still through bursts of quenchless revel  
 Went clouding all the high feast of the gods.  
 The stealing melancholy overcast  
 Even the sun-mirth of Phoebus' mighty lyre  
 And in mid dance sadden'd the slowing Nine.  
 Conjecture of the Father's absence long  
 Wherefore in musing, hush'd world solitude  
 He had enchain'd him o'er the subject lands  
 Watcher of things, to keep in loneliest brood  
 His solemn sheer earth-prospect ; on that thought  
 And on that theme turn'd all the talk of heaven  
 Nothing so much as his bright countenance  
 Not to behold first griev'd them, not to find  
 The Father on his throne, whence he at feast  
 Wise counsel gave them, his conceptions large  
 And himself still, throned at the dais head  
 Sat host and master of the blissful revel.  
 Not then to see what suns immortal hearts  
 From his blue sovereign eye the look that warms  
 Earth, heaven, existence, that had been enough  
 To gloom and to o'ercast celestial minds  
 But now when noised rumour through the feast  
 'He comes' had expectation more than once  
 Wrought to the pitch for sight of him, and still  
 He came not ; and the constellations bright  
 Sign after sign, stole up the steep of heaven  
 From vague conjecture into vaguer dread  
 The musing banquet sadden'd. And it gloom'd,  
 Moreover, with the gap of other powers  
 Dear and desir'd in heaven ; Hermes the wing'd  
 Of wit as heel, thought-feather'd, the delight  
 Of heaven's swift mirth and eloquent discourse  
 Him they had learnt at sudden hest of Zeus  
 To the world's end, nor came he yet, gone forth  
 On what wild road to scout the Titan ways  
 For unknown grievous tidings who could say?  
 Yet what was their amaze, when they beheld  
 Her flower-starr'd seat, though it was spring, in vain  
 Claim back the dusk loan of Persephone,  
 And hard by hers golden Demeter's chair  
 Mourn empty. Through each calm and blissful breast  
 Cold ran the thought of what Pluto, dark king



## PERSEUS

Once more might do, or what the Titans all  
In the abysm were plotting. For they too  
Offspring of the eternal who o'er earth  
Go forth with him to check the puissance gross  
And giant sap of Nature, Goddesses  
Divinely strong and strong laborious gods,  
They, too, forefelt Medusa ; yet immers'd  
Too earthly deep in each his special task  
Of soul less prescient, had but dimly seen  
From under the cold seas her ripening gaze  
A menace ; they foresaw not the near peril.



## BOOK III

Tell, Goddess, who dost lead melodious lyres  
Of that appalment of still dusking Gods ;  
Sing, to my verse give vision, for thou, too,  
Wast there! Do thou to my weak tongue add fire  
And daring give me drunk from Helicon  
That I, unblench'd, may chant heaven's secret things  
Embolden to describe celestial dread.  
Who of the enthron'd gods was first by far  
To see and to presage tremendous peril,  
Pallas forewarn'd when her shield opal she  
Gave to the Father ; she, and Leto's son,  
The kindler of day's glory, whose strong arm  
Shoots the eternal arrow of daylight  
And the curb'd fiery nostrils that breathe day  
Hold to their course, musician sweet and seer  
Superb, Phoebus Apollo. How should he  
Who still climbs nearest to the sky-vast mind  
High-sighting on his radiant car the world  
Prophet incomparable, help perceive?  
Not unperturb'd nor cloudless had he sat  
Amidst yon glorious choir, fair Muses nine,  
By thron'd Mnemosyne ; nor once alone  
Did he begin upon his lyre all gold,  
Preluding softly on the crashing strings  
To enchant heaven and deepen the high mirth.  
Oft had his hand linger'd the golden chords  
To scarce-heard music, brooding the rich storm  
That was to come, and oft abruptly ceas'd  
In fulness and mid-sweep of melody.  
In such a pause he unperceiv'd had risen  
Up from his sun-bright throne by Artemis  
His sister, and dusk holy Leto,—soft  
While no one mark'd ; and to a pillar stole  
Where by himself half in the fresh night air  
For truce to thronging thoughts, he might have view  
Of the hush'd, glorious, sleeping universe.  
There, gazing upon sunless continents  
Deep, as he gaz'd, the sun's great archer mus'd.



## PERSEUS

Each far-down noble sight beneath him sped  
 Remembering, the whole earth-spectacle  
 Down o'er his fiery chariot that day  
 Seen, from the sunrise to the reddening set  
 Unroll'd in panorama, he review'd  
 For key to all that darken'd on his mind  
 Vaguely prophetic, full of some high doom  
 On the world coming, ominously grand.  
 And more and more on memory's backward eye  
 Two sights, two chiefly big with purport loom'd  
 Dark, gathering height, portentous ; one at dawn  
 At the sundown, the other seen : alike  
 Fate-heavy, though with death and dreadful deeds  
 One pregnant was, that tall fleet seen at dawn  
 Sails of courageous beauty, glorying  
 To meet him, to be touch'd with rosy rays.  
 The other rich with all the bloom of life.  
 The bloom of life ! For it was Herë's fruit  
 Mysterious, fragrant, hung o'er Hell's dark chasm  
 Upon world-mothering branch by Atlas foot  
 Which leads up spirits from the chastening gloom  
 In Acheron and Lethe wash'd afresh  
 To strive toward the perfect thought of Zeus,—  
 Lures, kindled back, creation,—it was that  
 Phoebus had seen the last thing beautiful  
 Touch'd by his fading ray, when he had given  
 At sunset the gold reins to Helios  
 Hyperion's burning son, and to partake  
 Rest and the blissful feast and sleep in Heaven  
 Fared through the twilight sadder than his wont.  
 For passing Aithiopia, sweet isle  
 By sunset's marge where dwell the Aithiope folk  
 The immortals' faultless peers, through silent streets  
 Strange fact believeless, nor till now befallen,  
 Unwelcom'd he had pass'd nor Cepheus met  
 Sage king, nor Cassiopeia starry queen,  
 Nor yet the blissful food of his bright thoughts  
 For whose sake immortality was sweet  
 To him and every power in heaven unwed  
 For the dear glimpse of whose lov'd face it was  
 The golden isle saw him each day at eve  
 A lingerer back to heaven,—Andromeda.



### BOOK III

So sharply through his everlasting breast  
 The pang had gone, that now, when he careen'd  
 O'er Herë's garden, those world-ending vales  
 That shroud her mighty mysteries, the school  
 And wrestling-ground of far futurity  
 Palaestra of great spirits, where evermore  
 Heroes and heroines, the flower of Time  
 Train, exercise, and for great toils prepare  
 Until such time as in their fate deep-learn'd  
 They issue to the calling hour, the sweet  
 Constraining beckon of their natal sod  
 When o'er those glens and vasty vales he flew  
 They, too, seemed strangely silent ; and as now  
 He upward look'd where still suffus'd with light  
 (All his gigantic shoulders were in shade)  
 Tower'd solitary Atlas' bending head  
 And countenance that feels the weight of heaven,  
 He saw, or was it grief that clouded him,  
 Made him not see, upon those features grand  
 No such serene pain to teach the suffering world  
 Nor borne fatigue, nor that majestic pride  
 To lift the arch'd colossal firmament  
 Upon his single shoulder and support  
 The stars and heavens, the seasons and the hours  
 And glide superb of tranquil swerveless law.  
 Rather it seem'd upon that granite face  
 Massive and hard and rugged, stern joy  
 Came out, and with the last faint gleam was gone.  
 Then darkness seized the world ; and his own breast,  
 One with the golden fount of light and life  
 All clearness air and fire, so utterly  
 Invaded, that a moment Phoebus stood  
 The quench'd sad beacon of the universe  
 Robb'd, as it were, of his own radiant self.  
 He started and his ray-stock'd quiver grasp'd,  
 Dreading the ancient huge descent of night,  
 For the next moment, when his questing eye  
 Wander'd where that fresh cloud of foliage  
 That shades all life, great Herë's tree o'erhung  
 The hush'd choir of the hid Hesperides  
 And fire-breath'd Ladon, to his thought it seemed  
 He saw not there in odorous darkness glob'd



## PERSEUS

The solemn gold that Erebus o'crawes  
 And leads with far-flung fragrance out of Hell  
 Stirr'd with earth-memories, Persephone  
 In Hermes step, Persephone deep-stirr'd,  
 Pomona, and the hesitating spring.  
 And could it then be lost? Incredible!  
 The rally of all nature, which earth gave  
 To Herë, fair as her own awful breasts,  
 The globed glory of the motherhood  
 And wifehood of the world's eternal queen?  
 A gap of aching gloom was all he saw.  
 A moment, and so wild a thing it seem'd  
 Merely impossible, that murmuring:  
 'O mortal beauty which can so mislead  
 The swerveless eye of morning, and cloud up  
 In anguish the bright thought that beacons day,  
 Looks to bedaze the sun's lord, lovelier  
 Than Daphne's was and all as vainly chas'd!  
 So speaking, rallying in scorn of Night  
 Sun-eyed imagination to reshape  
 Those globèd splendours in the heart of gloom  
 He, spurning at his own frail thought, shone back  
 Into the god, and was himself again  
 In truth so brightly 'gainst such dire mischance  
 He flam'd, that but a stride or two 'twould seem  
 Suffic'd him to arrive the golden halls  
 Feast, couch and sparkling nectar. But once there,  
 In his own seat, among the radiant gods  
 It came to him! by that swift sympathy  
 Sun-ey'd imagination that makes one  
 His prescience with the brooding mind supreme,  
 He saw, and guess'd and trembl'd. Not the dusk  
 Of Night's descending raiment fills so wide  
 And saddens so upon the soul of air  
 As now upon Apollo's spirit gloom'd  
 Muffling the present from his master'd sight  
 The obscure reach and troubled shore of things  
 Unborn and yet in the womb labouring to be.  
 Through his soul's night a power of vision rush'd,  
 Throwing the windows of existence wide  
 To his bar'd eye. Once more he saw the glens  
 And vasty vales that bud futurity.



### BOOK III

The solemn sward of Herë. He beheld  
 There at the world's far end, where daylight still  
 Lay glorious with golden afternoon  
 Maia's fleet son, and the grave goddess mild,  
 Sad mother of the green world's maidenhood  
 Demeter. They had reached the awful chasm  
 Dim-gated with stupendous gloom, far down  
 By Atlas' foot, that gulfs toward Acheron  
 Pale with cross'd arms the glorious herald stood.  
 And his bow'd head was listening toward the abyss  
 Dejected, sad. It seem'd not he had heard  
 The girlish foot of Kora and with her  
 Come laughing flower on flower the lifeward way  
 The whole glad spring. Rather it seem'd as though  
 He had just struck upon the dismal rock  
 And struck in vain his mighty summoning wand :  
 Fruitless annunciation that made pause  
 His downward foot. So baffled, so abash'd  
 He stood, the glorious herald. Beside him  
 Scar'd with like knowledge wild, Demeter stood  
 Mournful bereavement of majestic eyes  
 Refilling with the ancient childless pain.  
 Up toward Herë's tree Apollo look'd  
 And saw, as divination had foreshown  
 Not as he fear'd, the whole branch daughterless  
 But from the threefold clustering fair fruit  
 Gold apples that the keys of being are,  
 One splendour gone. Two glories, yet, it seem'd,  
 Glimmering aloft in that cool world of green  
 A double charm yet linger'd, to rear up  
 In the cold strength of her proud purity  
 And patience sweet the training glades of birth.  
 But the third mystic splendour of Earth's queen  
 And wedlocks both, 'twas gone, the fruit which bears  
 Inscrib'd upon it beauty's sacred name :  
 From whose perfume such pleas'd enchantment breathes  
 Pride, passion, and exulting sense of life.  
 Fruit awful, fruit mysterious sprung long since  
 From that self foam that flower'd the Idalian queen.  
 This was it that with waft of breathing bloom  
 In Hermes' downward step, a present aid  
 Before him, with far flung emboldenment



## PERSEUS

Kindling desire of life in the sad dead  
 Steals with the rich earth-smell to Pluto's throne  
 And fills with memories Persephone,  
 Pomona stings, and all the lingering flowers.  
 Now Phoebus saw the towering plot. It flash'd  
 In one glimpse on him: all creation stay'd  
 Beneath the sod, and while his brother's wand  
 Was powerless to escort the flowery pomp  
 The vernal visitation surging up  
 While shrinking sad the buds of hawthorn lagg'd,  
 Crocus and daffodil demurr'd to come,  
 Missing from under earth the fragrant lure  
 And heartening beckon of Hesperian bloom  
 While murmuring vast futurity stood check'd,  
 Caught in the birthpang, helpless to break forth  
 In gap of that suppression, she meanwhile  
 Who ripens for the stiffening of things  
 Should rise, should burst from her cold ocean lair  
 The world-enmarbling Horror beautiful,  
 The stony daughter of Phorcys, born long since  
 For that end in the sea-depths, for that end  
 Nurs'd on the angry milk of all the fall'n  
 Sad Titanesses, Ceto's baleful child.  
 Toward them the mighty visionary next  
 Turn'd in his thought to find those fallen Powers  
 Where upon rolling sea-levels they lay,  
 The fathomless dim slope, thick-strewn with shells,  
 With stirless forests shaded, far remov'd  
 Toward the desolate Arctic, and the ends  
 Of earth and sea. There groans the emerald ice  
 Forever and majestically roofs  
 Oceanus and Tethys. But not now  
 In that dim lair the Titan Gods he saw  
 Lie heap'd about immortal agonies  
 Despairing writhen postures, killed with wrath.  
 From measureless dejection they had risen  
 Lifted with ecstasy and one and all  
 Strode with the mighty murmur, the amaz'd  
 Ejaculation of a vast surprise  
 Toward where she sat 'twixt Ceto's marble knees  
 Fallen there, midwiv'd by their nine-acon gaze  
 Of endless tortur'd hope into the world



### BOOK III

Medusa. Like some forest of sea-weed  
 Or clinging tentacled anemone  
 That with the freshening wave begins to stir  
 'Neath the salt tide, so her disastrous hair  
 Aswarm with dreadful coils had eager risen  
 Swaying alive with sinister heave and stir.  
 She lifted up her world-enmarbling Face,  
 And strongly lean'd on the hard rock her hand  
 Such horror fell on Phoebus, as he stood  
 Though on heaven's floor, he, though in prophet trance  
 Lifted a moment his immortal hand  
 With fear involuntary, as to shade  
 Immortal eyes, half-marbled though a God,  
 Though with amazement merely, all so sudden  
 To see, so near him that life-curdling gaze  
 Snuffing the world's corruption wafted down  
 With nostrils wide. Then, as a dreamer starts  
 At some fierce thing that beads his clammy brow  
 Out of sleep shaken, and with sweet relief  
 Looks round on the familiar world and sighs  
 So now Apollo from the vision dread.  
 In at eyes dizzy with gigantic things  
 In at the painful hollow of his ear  
 That ach'd and humm'd from the fathomless deeps  
 Delightfully the blissful banquet came  
 The laughter of immortals and the sound  
 Of nectar pour'd and gleam of golden cups,  
 And beauty of heaven's gracious denizens.  
 Long, after sights Titanic, weak he stood  
 Strengthening his soul with all the pillar'd calm  
 Of his great Father's mansion, each fair sight  
 Olympian, drinking with sooth'd gladden'd eyes  
 Some strength or other catching from each god  
 That feasted there, each puissant reveller  
 Now drank he power from Herë where she sat  
 Majestic at the board's head, such mild strength  
 As queens the calm of cities, and all things  
 Mothers with gentleness : by her to keep  
 In one household the wedded peace of things  
 Veil'd Hestia, whose virginal chaste eye  
 The hearthfire of existence gardians bright  
 In heaven and earth! With them together thron'd



## PERSEUS

Conservators of quiet, as they sat  
 Cold caryatids steadfast to support  
 The pureness of the mighty arch we see  
 She who that blue severity of peace  
 Forever upon Atlas' bended neck  
 With Zeus made fast, with Zeus the murmuring chafe  
 And anguish of pent Titan powers confin'd  
 And founded with him the majestic world  
 And that great other Silence who for Zeus  
 Roots his grand calm, strict awful Nemesis,  
 Who 'gainst infringement fends unfalling bliss,  
 Exactress of all dues in heaven and earth.  
 From all these the bright visionary took  
 Strength, and exulting in his Father's might  
 The more his soul grew fearlessly serene  
 He but the more busied this ardent thought  
 Hiding from all Gods the forecasted peril  
 For himself first of all Gods soon to know  
 His envying peers in heaven yet ignorant,  
 First of the Father craving to receive  
 For his bright shafts the glory of that quell  
 Medusa's slaughter. And so rapt he stood  
 Perplexing deep his prophet soul to find  
 The drift of the eternal purposes,  
 Olympian musings whither they might tend,  
 He saw not how himself, meanwhile, thus transc'd  
 The statue of his ardour had become  
 The gaze of Heaven. For now, when at some word  
 Athene, leaning toward Herë spoke,  
 On him they anchor'd those grave shining eyes  
 That empress the sky revel. 'Twas of him  
 Standing superb and beautiful they talk'd  
 While his rapt upward face at once became  
 The eye-mark of the sublimest eyes in heaven  
 There at the board's head. Nothing of all which  
 Perceiv'd he, the bright archer of the sun  
 But with glad hope feeding adventurous fire,  
 Thus with himself and noblest thought discours'd.  
 'To thee it falls, this journey, this great quest  
 With risk, with glory inconceivable  
 Fraught ; to thy hand, Apollo! Or why else  
 This warning vision granted and to thee



BOOK III

Alone of Gods. Contrive that it be thou,  
 Who else Apollo? of all powers in Heaven  
 Who of the Father's soul, belov'd as thou?  
 That dost him mightiest service, whom he tasks  
 From morn to chariot to the crimson set  
 Lamp of the labouring universe, his sun,  
 And drive his fiery horses strongly curb'd  
 And all day shoot his darkness-routing beam  
 Creative, without which life could not be,  
 Nor think I to stand low in her regard  
 This peerless perfect maiden, with whose fate  
 So in the horoscope of things I read  
 The wide world's doth commingle: nothing less  
 As now comes clear, as now I take for sure  
 Than this great sally for Medusa's head:  
 What power in heaven soever shall for earth  
 Dare files of Titan foes, and his bold way  
 Making through terrors and through tears, shall run  
 Annihilation's gauntlet. Yet must he  
 Who shall deliver in the day of doom  
 The world and thee, divine Andromeda  
 Be pattern'd, shap'd after the very heart  
 And choice of infinite Wisdom: And to thee  
 No less dear, no less pleasing. Ah! who then  
 Shall he be, of the unwed youth of Heaven  
 The sighing and enamour'd sons of Zeus  
 Who at the banquet blest of Gods with men  
 Amid the grass beside thee, beneath trees  
 Or wandering oft among the primroses  
 Are thy immortal wooers not indign  
 Not all unworthy thy celestial grace.  
 But to be lord complete of thy sway'd soul  
 Which of us then? Not Maia's mighty son  
 Man's sociable helper; howsoe'er  
 His shapely fleetness, the palaestra's flower  
 His wit and divine grace framed to be loved  
 Praise worded by the prince of eloquence  
 Hath made thy cheek burn and thy soft eyes flame  
 Yet hath his gainful spirit covetous  
 Of too much riches made thee cold again.  
 Not Ares, though thou feel'st him through and through  
 Thrill, like a trumpet, and though his great strength



## PERSEUS

Most beautiful in armour, flashing charm  
 Through fierceness,—won thee pleasing terror 'twas  
 To take by storm thy maid-soft gentleness,  
 Have I not seen thee shrink and straightway shut  
 Thy beauty up in virginal disdain,  
 Proud coldness on his strong face to surprise  
 That ruthless gleam of sudden cruelty  
 Which mars the frank pride of his martial eye,  
 When his false friend, when Approdite's look  
 He catches. Nor hath Approdite's son  
 Love's burning self, wing'd Eros beautiful  
 Mystic Iacchus nor another thriven  
 So in thy pleas'd regard but that one note  
 Rich suspiration of the enchanted sigh  
 Breath'd from Apollo's mighty lyre sufficed  
 To draw thy face toward me, sense and soul  
 Enthrall'd to feel the heavenly power of song  
 Wedded to vision and high poesy.  
 O sure am I, if any be of minds  
 Immortal, as to what mute claim her heart  
 Through droop'd eyes hath acknowledg'd, she is mine  
 Mine easily. Only let me, forearm'd  
 'Gainst rash conjecture and the plumbless will  
 The incalculable purpose of the Highest  
 Make not too sure a man do not meanwhile  
 Bereave me of the noblest heart that beats  
 Now bending toward me, and this perilous road  
 Exploit for Gods not unto clay be given  
 To frailty trusted and terrestrial feet  
 A champion of the tristful race that toils  
 And weeps toward heaven, the athelete of the dust  
 Frail staircase of the infinite ascent,  
 Link'd intermediate between god and worm  
 Whom to lift heavenward and the world with him  
 Zeus favours with his sovereign regard.  
 Yet though his puissance loves best to achieve  
 Ends the most difficult with poorest means  
 How should this be? now, in such direful clash  
 With Darkness, on the mere dice-throw of hands  
 That shall be dust, on parriable strength  
 Courage that well may waver, to hinge sheer  
 The trembling world, that his omnipotence



# BOOK III

He may show forth and flaunt in the huge face  
 Of ancient Power swollen to its last resurgence?  
 But hush Apollo! and thy soul's dear hope  
 With every trace of this dread vision screen  
 Sink in the wells of bode oracular,  
 Hide more inexplicably dark than truth,  
 For see, where comes to tax thy utmost strength  
 Of secrecy, the daughter of the Highest,  
 Most to be dreaded of all Goddesses  
 As thy rival pair'd with thee to compete  
 In equal favour of the Father's choice  
 For this great perilous glory; and if now  
 Toward some man the poising scales of Power  
 Incline, the terrible journey, and the rush  
 To that sweet rescue 'tis my heaven to win,  
 She most will second for some hero slip  
 Belov'd of her the intolerable choice  
 And in the murmuring face of Heaven abet.  
 For long time now she hungers to be deck'd  
 As I know well, and make the stormy folds  
 Of her tempestuous aegis terrible  
 With the dead horror of Medusa's face.'  
 As thus he spoke and in the serene blaze  
 Of his sun-beaming countenance disguised  
 Knowledge momentous, vision-haunted thought  
 He saw towards him from the banquet come  
 That splendour arm'd who from the brain of Zeus  
 Self-mothered sprang, Athene haughty helm'd  
 Her maiden bosom shadow'd with the folds  
 Of her dread aegis Gorgonless as yet.  
 She, onward as she came with slow step paus'd  
 Smitten, she too, in her divining soul  
 With that same dread that had Apollo seized  
 So read the glorious archer. He perceived  
 While on heaven's floor the ignorance-routing point  
 She rested of her spear armipotent.  
 Upon her noble face energetic, strong,  
 The troubled soul of wisdom like a sea  
 Shivering in breeze, rock'd to foreboding's dark  
 Yet to a sight less piercing it might seem  
 That she but ponder'd calmly unconcern'd,  
 Which way, on toils majestic, she should turn



## PERSEUS

Upon the morrow ; to what land belov'd  
 Or sage city of the infant world  
 That crav'd her fostering care, toward Babylon  
 Or Memphis, or perchance some ruder hold  
 Cyclopean-wall'd, which dreaming her far off  
 Beautiful unborn Hellas she had built.  
 As she came near Apollo was deceiv'd  
 To think her calm, so carefully serene  
 Disdainful in a mask of watchful pride  
 She the impetuous ardour did conceal  
 Of her energetic, earnest active will.  
 But her first look him undeceiv'd, although  
 Not with hush'd eagerness or breathless air  
 She came upon him and thus spoke and said :  
 ' I blame thee, son of Leto ! what dost thou  
 Here standing far from the delightful revel  
 Archer incomparable, prince of seers,  
 Not on earth only but in heaven as well  
 Of thoughts that cloud and glooming cares against,  
 Physician and musician. For when, Night  
 Weaves once more o'er the eyeless hemisphere  
 Dreams and oblivion and death's image sleep,  
 Thou, Phoebus, in the golden halls of heaven  
 Dost, for each blissful strength here banqueting  
 In lieu of pausèd toils from action pent  
 The music of creation wake afresh  
 On thy great lyre. Is it for thee to cease  
 So early on the sweet, the solemn strings  
 Why hast thou from the gladsome feast arisen  
 And here withdrawn thee, while strange wonderment  
 At our great Father's absence still prolong'd,  
 Holds all the Gods in murmuring sad amaze.  
 Know'st thou then, what dim terror mines their hearts ?'  
 So said she, and with keen enquiry fix'd  
 The splendour of her shunless scrutiny  
 Full on Apollo, on his beauteous face.  
 He, lowering not his uplift gaze, replied :  
 ' What terror, O my sister, here in heaven,  
 At heaven's serene feast in mid-revelry,  
 If terror can o'ercome immortal minds ?'  
 And the sage smiling Goddess, lightening scorn  
 ' What terror, sayst thou ? rapt sun-vision'd seer



# BOOK III

So on the heights of vision held enthral'd,  
 That to his throneless and thought-baffling void  
 Which orphans Heaven and shakes the powers, thou seem'st  
 Blind and preságeless utterly. Come down  
 Prince from thy radiant height ; attend and hear  
 What terror can o'ercome immortal minds.  
 Ere thou cam'st hither thou must needs have mark'd  
 Howe'er to the poetic ecstasy  
 And those great breathings of thy mighty lyre  
 Thou sat'st withdrawn, thou must have felt this damp  
 On heaven's serene feast, in mid revelry  
 Oft clouding o'er, as still the sad word pass'd  
 Blurring the brightness of celestial brows.  
 Hast thou heard speak Apollo, yea, or dream'd  
 Up on thy golden sun aloof in heaven  
 Of a face,—a face that lurks beneath the fade  
 And perish of creation dim surmis'd,  
 A countenance ne'er seen of gods or men  
 Dreadful and lovely whose sad luring gaze  
 Slays but to see, death slowly beautiful?  
 And the bright God still with averted ken  
 'What! the world's frost, Medusa? who hath not  
 Heard speak of her? and how should I not know  
 I who in battle ever do engage  
 From my great sun, now as I northward swerve  
 Or southward roll, with shafted archery  
 Of beauty, life and joy half her cold gaze,  
 In those two other Gorgons hard as she  
 Her own look's icy sisters, who congeal  
 Either white pole with their invading snows.  
 Am I God's archer, Pallas, pledg'd to fight  
 Alternately with Stheno as she binds  
 In her strong stare her arctic continent  
 And far to southward, as her watery pole  
 She stiffens, Euryale's wide-icing look  
 Medusa's sentries they, the push'd outpost  
 Of her stark power. But that she should to Gods  
 The feasting and assembled strength of Heaven  
 Seem all at once so dimly terrible  
 Pallas, it blanks my comprehension quite.  
 How should the Father's absence, strange I grant  
 To her have reference suffer'd as she is



## PERSEUS

In the infinite gentleness of sovereign power  
Yok'd, married to the world's large purposes  
Spar'd in his magnanimity, that she  
Put to majestic uses may subserve  
Beneficence and aid the general scheme:  
Which when she meets, power without grudging spread  
Freely through the participating world  
In joy and beauty, it so mitigates  
The cold contagion of her fierce despair  
Strain'd through earth's pores, this bulk of land and sea  
That deadens its heart-freezing force, her glance  
Retards not stops the mighty pace of things.  
Was it not for this very cause long since  
Thy foresight's predecessor, my sun's thief,  
Erring in fierce compassion for mankind  
For that he would her wide world-fettering gaze  
Shatter, Prometheus, the good Titan, fell  
That striding spirit too hasty to forestall  
Perfection and force on the slow sure pace  
Now in the crucifying gorge austere  
Torn, where his brother Atlas lifts the heavens,  
Rent with remorse that renders tormentless  
His eagle, the nail'd mighty dreamer rues  
His ruth too rashly prescient. What ghost then  
What wandering relic of Prometheus' spirit  
Pallas, revisits in this blinding ache  
Of sovereign wisdom to illumine their hearts  
The Gods with Gorgon terrors? Let them ask  
Themis, consult at the deep oracle  
Of wisdom that the world's foundations laid  
Co-architect with Thunder. She will tell  
Removing their vain fears, how Gorgon looks  
Which do but hinder and obstruct their toils  
Serve but to give his brooding sapience pause  
Leisure to ponder each slow-measur'd step  
To that far unknown bliss toward which his will  
Invisibly each hour in secret moves.  
But suffer me to question on my part  
What makes thy coming hither. Seest thou then  
Yonder war-loaden fleet no longer now  
On the moon-sparkling ripple as before  
As 'twere toward some hesitated haven



### BOOK III

Stand ghostly in the moon light motionless,  
 Sails drooping, and suspended oars a-drop?  
 Now from their mid-sea and enforced roadstead  
 Breaks anchor every hero-weighted hulk.  
 Or the tower shattering strength of siege and sack  
 Hath, or the laughing Cyprian, in despite  
 Of thy keen sentinel watch, made every ship  
 Alive with oars the shimmering water smite.  
 Was it not to cope Perseus they unmoor'd  
 From Pagasae, this freightage of arm'd youth  
 Enamour'd iron, shipp'd in a sigh of fire  
 For Danaë, his mother, and to win  
 From him in battle his great heritage  
 Rich Argos, and the empire of his sires.  
 Hast thou forsook thy dauntless man of men  
 Pallas, that hero of thy soul belov'd  
 Whom, cast a waif on rude Seriphian rock  
 By his old grandsire's never greying fear  
 And oracles that brand him his doom'd slayer,  
 Coop'd in Seriphos pining for his home,  
 Thou hast still shielded with thy goddess care  
 But now, a more than mother, shield'st no more?  
 Else why in face of this great armament  
 That threatens her lov'd Argos, begg'st thou not  
 Of Herë now to slake her ceaseless ire  
 If only her beloved land to fence  
 With its own heir. O but implacably  
 She burns, I know, though but his name to hear  
 Spouse of the Highest, for that the awful tongue  
 Of rumour in hush'd whisper bruits of him  
 That he, not meanly sir'd, of that breed is  
 Whom the dream'd beauty of the world's far bliss  
 Impassions the supreme Might to raise up,  
 However Herë grieve, from his own blood  
 To help mankind, when Time needs, demigods  
 Deliverers, captains of the world's great march.  
 But thou at length with Herë hast took part  
 Doubtless in thy divine chaste virgin mind  
 Asham'd to own and sister any more  
 This man upon the bar-sinister side  
 Thy brother ; and though mortal and thy soul  
 Thrilling with heavenly ruth, though of like thoughts



## PERSEUS

Mindèd with thee, after thy very heart  
 Thou could'st not choose but leave him born in face  
 Of Herè's sacrosanct majestic law,  
 So favour'd of thee, though thyself unwed,  
 Sprung as he is of Puissance law-uncurb'd  
 Sluic'd from the random stealth of infinite Power,  
 The sleepless Might creative that o'erflows  
 On his own world enamour'd to produce.  
 I saw him at daybreak from my sun-car,  
 Aurora leading up the blue ascent,  
 And could not but with admiration warm  
 To see him stand listening pale scout on scout  
 Rumoured approach of this great towering fleet  
 Ship after ship, and others still came on.  
 By Olpae's mighty rampart calm he stood  
 The rampart old that grimly smiled with morn  
 As he in steel dark glowing, and inspired  
 For topmost deed the complete equal seem'd  
 Of the tower-shattering splendour that burn'd on.  
 Hadst thou beheld him then confront such odds  
 Unshaken with his island few in arms  
 They pale around, he dauntlessly serene,  
 Thou hadst not, Pallas, found it in thy heart  
 However coldly in chaste pride estrang'd  
 From him, thy once lov'd hero, not, re-warm'd,  
 Not, thy heart swelling with the old sweet pride,  
 Aglow with exultation, to have turn'd,  
 To have swoop'd and stood all succour by his side.  
 He ceas'd, days mighty archer, and stood mute  
 Expectant, weighing how on her his words  
 Wrought: for her quick sagacity he fear'd  
 Even while he sought to fathom. While his eye  
 Was studiously averted from her face  
 With ear a-stretch to hear what she would say,  
 The dazzling lover of Andromeda  
 Stood, hot with jealousy of him he prais'd.  
 And, greatly mov'd, Athene answer'd him:  
 'Little, Apollo, thou know'st what divine  
 Deep holy love, how canst thou? thou forsooth!  
 That look'st but to the beauty of the face,  
 What ardour of august high tenderness  
 My soul can feel, all virgin as I am,



### BOOK III

(And therefore the more burning passionate)  
 For the young mind, whose beauty once it fires  
 With its shy bloom of virtue immature  
 My austere maiden liking, not with lyre  
 Soul-softening or the facile spur of praise  
 With music do I seek that noble mind  
 To charm to me, but with the difficult lure  
 Of deeds and arduous toils and hard emprise  
 With sharp sore pangs of trial and distress  
 Chastening, ennobling, drawing by degrees  
 Into a heavenlier likeness with myself  
 And the wide soul of Being of which we are parts.  
 I, Phoebus, that belovèd of my choice  
 Woo, and with such stern courtship do make mine.  
 But thou, who lean'st in sight-fill'd ecstasy  
 Of vision from thy chariot-rim all eye  
 To see created beauty and desire  
 Inflam'd but with the visible frail mask  
 We call a face or feature, and for that  
 Dost leave thy glorious course aloof in heaven  
 Beauty's reality that flies thee still  
 Her chaste eluding glimpses to pursue  
 And clasp instead some tree-like grace thou saw'st  
 Or flowerlike charm, which not thy Daphne was  
 Or face uplifted Clytië and with shows  
 Blank shows be disappointed, of such love  
 As bleeds not from Love's shallow-piercing wound,  
 Nor can be taught save in Athene's school  
 Thou canst have no conception. How should I  
 Think'st thou, forsake this dauntless seed of kings  
 My own great Father's blood, this man of men  
 I have made mine with such dear bonds of pain  
 Sore links of hardship suffer'd for my sake  
 From boyhood and to such troth-plight of peril  
 Pledg'd, with heroic sigh: with noble tears  
 Affianc'd to me? What I abandon him!  
 Not for a moment! No, never believe,  
 Howe'er I have, in his worst need, withheld,  
 Though thrilling with compunctious ruth, my help,  
 My powerful help, stood by, and let his soul  
 The uttermost of toil and danger know  
 Deem not I can forsake him, nor miscall



## PERSEUS

Such schooling of his strength abandonment  
 Thou wouldst not, didst thou savour that high care  
 Of goddesses, the proud abstaining love  
 It asks to build up heroes. But enough!  
 I thank thee and it warms me to the heart  
 That thou, Apollo, for my warrior feel'st,  
 Thy kindred in the woe-entangled flesh  
 Girt with much peril, menac'd yet serene,  
 Such kindness, of fraternal sympathy ;  
 In admiration brother'd with myself  
 To see in him God's purpose scabbarded  
 His undrawn sword yet smouldering in the sheathe.  
 Fear not for him: he shall not come to harm.  
 Now while festivity with nectarous drench  
 Holds sunk at his large ease the strength of war  
 And Cypris in ambrosial revel quench'd,  
 Forgetful, both, of man's tumultuous heart  
 I shall full vantage of the starlit hour—  
 My opportunity—forestalling them  
 Seize, and before upstartled chieftains rous'd  
 From sleep to appalment, all arm'd as I am  
 A mighty apparition sweep, these ships  
 To scatter and fear strike, and every sail  
 Irrevocably to the four winds disperse :  
 If so I may, or at the least withstand  
 Backwatering oars and night-steered keels to storm  
 Olpae's high towers, main object which they mask  
 As I deem, and thou, too shrewdly forbod'st  
 With moonlight oars fast hurrying full-sail-set  
 Splashing and standing out for Argolis.  
 Another and a mightier aim they mean  
 The grandson not the grandsire weak: to wrest  
 From him in battle his great heritage  
 Rich Argos ; and attraction strong, one way  
 Rush of so many iron hearts to draw,  
 The loadstone within hard Seriphian rock,  
 Main lovely cause, chief rose-cheek'd argument  
 Of this tremendous arming, Danaë  
 The heiress of an empire,—her to win  
 Over the slain corpse of her dreadless son  
 From heaven's sheer golden threshold I must plunge  
 Mother and son with my care to protect



### BOOK III

Lest if they wreck, Zeus afterward should chide,  
 Bloom as they are of that all-golden shower  
 The storm-toss'd freightage of the daedal chest  
 In wilder foam imperill'd worse ; for which,  
 And much it will surprise thee, Herë hastes  
 She chiefly urges my down-sallying foot.  
 That wrath thou speak'st of, that she burn'd withal,  
 Her injur'd angry sorrow at this flower  
 Of the impassion'd Lightning-power at play  
 The dropling of his Thunder, his love-child,  
 Howe'er it seem to thee incredible  
 She feels no more : Pangless and petty grown  
 Grown trivial in the sweep of large events,  
 'Tis lost and drown'd before what threatening comes  
 In the withdrawal strange from his own feast  
 Of heaven's great host, master of its high revel  
 While her dear Argos trembles in those ships.  
 Wrought up to some great act I know not what  
 She broods with regal aspect : But at last  
 For the world's sake and her wide motherhood  
 Of all things, for creation, her sweet babe,  
 In jeopardy, willing, as she declares  
 To merge the mighty differences, that so long  
 Hath concord here in her august household  
 Threaten'd to mar, and rend the universe,  
 To his creative wisdom that so yearns  
 Ever to ease on his own beauteous world  
 The surge of its beneficence, she yields :  
 And hath to crown her willingness with deeds  
 That old still unwean'd hate, nurs'd ceaselessly  
 For Perseus, now to my exceeding joy  
 Forsworn at last ; nay, strictly upon me  
 (His secret helper still against her wrath)  
 Wouldst thou believe it ? laid her solemn charge  
 Breath'd anxiously imperial, while she grasp'd  
 High up her golden staff pomegranate-topp'd,  
 To see to it, he comes not now to harm.  
 So urg'd by that world-queening hest I come  
 Wing'd for the warlike sally, and word-fraught  
 To thee, too, brother. The weight of the world's sore care  
 Seem'd lifted in her brow's wide majesty  
 As she enjoin'd me softly in my ear



## PERSEUS

Lowering her tones imperial to entreat  
 Thee, Phoebus back into the blissful revel  
 Thy rapt and upward ardour having seen  
 With awe and watch'd thy cloudless unconcern  
 Here at heaven's threshold lean'd above the world  
 Say wilt thou to nerve back the minds of Gods  
 To heaven's lyre-orphan'd revelry return  
 The songless deprivation of heaven's feast  
 As Herë craves, and what thyself hast seen  
 Of far-glimps'd consolation, all that makes  
 Once more a sun of thy resplendent face  
 Pour, Healer, in the cheer'd glad ear of heaven.  
 Or wilt thou rather my fleet-quelling foot  
 Accompany, and in his dear defence  
 This matchless and imperill'd man I love  
 Co-ardent with me, work the purpose out  
 Which cloudy with stupendous reverie  
 Broods on the Father's brow,—upon some task  
 Majestic, shall I say? some world-exploit  
 To send his son, the champion of his choice?  
 Nay, an emprise illustrious, terrible,  
 No less than to release a trembling earth  
 From swift enmarblement of Gorgon looks.  
 So Pallas said, and as she spoke, she gripp'd  
 Her lance resistless, sign of what strong thoughts  
 World-urging work'd in her energetic will.  
 Impassion'd against peril with pain restrain'd  
 From action. Yet with its impetuous surge  
 Though her young bosom swell'd, more strongly still  
 Her mind controll'd the impulse. Patiently  
 She stood, while her fair eyes in calmness steel'd,  
 The gray quick glance of her deep heavenly eyes  
 Rested on Phoebus' countenance. He replied:  
 'A rashly splendid project and all thine  
 In its swift-plann'd audacity! superb!  
 Soul of impetuous forethought, with whose fire  
 To liken in heaven, earth or under earth  
 I know not what more eagle-pinion'd swoops  
 Except heaven's bolted thunder with like pounce  
 Darting occasion to outstrip and sieze.  
 Rash! and though yet better perhaps postpon'd  
 In reverence of the Father, till he come





BOOK III

To ratify with wisdom that sees all  
Weak premonitions, judgements weak, for thee  
Not temerarious were, perhaps this rush  
If thou go sole, straight for the baleful Head,  
Whose gaze envisages the world with fear  
Of its own petrification. But for me  
To meddle! I speak not of the emprise  
Gorgonian, haply to my own strong hand  
That guides the sun and slew vast Python old  
By Zeus to be committed—in that hope  
I and all powers thy flaming rivals stand  
But, Pallas, this thy navy-daunting plunge  
How should I partisan with my pure shafts?  
Displease Ares, no provocation given?  
And Cypris, too? causelessly incense both?  
I whose enkindling function in all things  
Life, holy life, joy, beauty fostering,  
My daylong glorious task the eternal power  
By all heaven's blue hath sunder'd sheer from thine;  
This radiant arc of glory I describe  
Aloof in heaven. And if on earth I range  
Whether Parnassos or the Muses' choir  
Claros or Delphos I revisit, still  
Must I sun-high my lamp-like station keep  
In shrouding grove or pure lone mountain air  
Or deep within man's soul interpreter  
Sunlike revealer of the Father's mind  
Seer, healer, singer, poet,—I must be  
Serenely solitary not less aloof  
From the world's strife, from all the dust and stir  
Of action, that so stains the limpid air  
Diaphanous, bright holy nurse of life,  
And muddies thought and dimming the clear soul  
Of mankind, whirls into excess and crime.  
These rather to atone and purify  
With expiation, when dark powers their due  
In suffering, madness and remorse have ta'en.  
The broad largesse of my soul-kissing beam  
To heal and bless and make beauty hath Zeus  
My shafted archery of gladness given.  
Do thou rather my step accompany  
Back to heaven's banquet and in this great blank



## PERSEUS

Of Power's own glance to lead the heavenly revel  
Assist me to rekindle quenchless mirth  
With what of inspiration I have caught  
Here in the moon, for comfort hither come  
From heaven's sheer golden threshold to survey  
The bosom of three dreaming continents  
Dusk Asia, dusk Europe and the vast  
Of star-hung nightly Libya. Wouldst learn  
The nature of this mighty act, to which  
Wrought up, thou sayst, the mother of all things  
Broods in her soul benignant. 'Tis no less  
Than blissful Hebe's marriage ; to admit  
Into the knit world's large affiancy  
Youth's loveliness, force, freshness, that she may,  
Not brushing from her bloom that keeps the world  
From wrinkles in eternal beauty young,  
Make fast and tighten with a last strong loop  
The tie world-binding, supreme knot of all  
Hers and the Thunderer's union. And know'st thou  
The man thrice-blest shall groom the world's dear bride?  
Thy flower of men, he, Pallas from whose birth  
Her eyesore, eyed askance with jealousy  
After so long pursued with her fierce wrath  
Tonight, no earlier, she, as thou hast said  
To heal forever the wide-wounding jar  
'Twixt her and Zeus and seal heaven's harmony  
The cloud of her displeasure lifts at last.  
And now in view of breathèd oracles  
Most ancient murmuring from the deeps of earth  
Together with that mighty interdict  
Zeus laid on us austere her to keep  
Long choosing his heroic son-in-law  
It is no wonder, Pallas, that the mind  
World-marrying, whose clear assorting glance  
Can match and pair and through all discords find  
Whate'er in mortal or immortal makes  
For harmony in wedlock, should in him,  
The hero of thy heart, see Hebe's peer,  
And the strong bloom of his young beauty hers  
To match completely. What else could have laid  
The mother of creation without Power  
First ask'd, in absence of omnipotence



### BOOK III

To plan the blissful bridal? To my mind  
 The very breadth and sweep of this great scheme  
 Bosoming all things in benignity  
 Could have for inspiration one sole fount  
 The Father's will. But for thy midnight plunge  
 To earth at Herë's bidding, 'tis all vain  
 I tell thee. Credit my prophetic breast  
 And that large bodement drunk at the day-dawn  
 When first behind Aurora scattering flowers  
 I mounted, and my team's fresh vigorous fire  
 Rein'd in. Remembering (I could not choose  
 But think upon them) those two sons of Zeus  
 Mortal and griefless, god and demigod  
 The omen'd eagles of his thunder borne  
 To this world shock, as in my soul I search'd  
 The drift of the eternal purposes  
 Even at that moment came the answer given.  
 Vision portentous omeneing my road  
 At outset, the first thing day's fresh beam caught  
 (Sight terrible inkling disastrous deeds)  
 Mail'd wrath in this armada of white sail  
 Dancing on the Agean's breast war-plough'd!  
 Nay, I beheld burning at the admiral-poop  
 With laughter and allurements Her who sows  
 The peopled earth and dark behind who reaps  
 Before him shrill'd the trumpet-nostrill'd shout  
 Of his great horses neighing toward war  
 Scenting destruction. This great sail must on  
 So dooms with his fate-sealing fiat Zeus  
 In vain wouldst thou with arm'd and sentinel stride  
 At Herë's hest swoop vigilant to check  
 Battle's impetuosity, forestall  
 Her son's rash dangerous nature: Hath she not  
 Sleep with world-stilling wand, already charg'd  
 To keep at glassy anchorage all that fleet  
 From Eurus, lest one faint night creeping air  
 Blow on it thence and guard as watchfully  
 Those congregated shrouds from the mild breath  
 Which whispers love, the breath of Zephyrus.  
 Yet lo! what wind that wafts the eternal will  
 Blows on them, without faintest breeze to stir  
 Hush'd ocean. Wouldst thou too hold back the plough



## P E R S E U S

That furrows with such sovereign cleavage on  
 The eternal purpose, I tell thee no freak  
 Of Ares fierce strength, fiery caprice  
 Hath stirr'd forth now at this still starlit hour  
 Forth from the blissful banquet ere Zeus come  
 On those transc'd sails the Fury of bright arms.  
 Desist ; thy fruitless errand is forestall'd,  
 And come, let us together back to feast  
 To hear of this great bridal, what it is  
 Grave Herë's queenly counsel holds at large,  
 To bless withal the groaning universe :  
 And in thy chair beside the Father's seat  
 Where with the sage pure Muses thou dost sit  
 Hephaestus and divine fresh Artemis  
 Give hearing wise unto the mighty song  
 I mean to sing, and thou thyself engage  
 In such celestial converse as shall charm  
 All heaven to hear, in silence of high thoughts  
 Transc'd, this almighty absence not to feel  
 That mines them, till the Father's wish'd return.  
 He ceas'd, and his day-kindling eyes, the joy  
 Of Nature, archery the rout of shade  
 Withdrew from their far gaze over the world,  
 One step Apollo took, one rhythmic step  
 As he were eager on his lyre to tune  
 The tempest glad and care-dispelling crash  
 Of those great sounds he seem'd to meditate  
 Yet ever through that radiant mask of joy,  
 (Not all a mask, so glad he was to bode  
 That hero whom he fear'd with Hebe wed)  
 Dreading within his prophet mind the glance  
 More than sagacious Pallas fix'd on him  
 To read his very soul. Nor did she yet  
 Avert the earnest beauty of her eyes  
 From his calm heavenly countenance, but took  
 His hand in hers and thus abruptly said  
 With sudden vehement utterance : ' No, Apollo,  
 I cannot think Zeus in his mind all-wise  
 Now at this moment when upon the verge  
 Of vast events we tremble with the world,  
 This half-drawn weapon of his puissant will  
 Would sheathe to cloy with marriage. But should she



### BOOK III

The patroness of marriage, Heaven's great queen,  
 Mother of things, on their strength's pillar up  
 Her purpose that so world-benignant seems  
 Themis and Nemesis, and easily  
 Carry with her in this wide blank of Power  
 To cheer them, the dismay'd banquet of Gods  
 That, Phoebus, is a likelihood indeed  
 To be dreaded and met! Never to that  
 Will I consent, but with my utmost power  
 Resist such dulling of my champion's strength  
 Committed to me, his steel'd edge prevent  
 From melting though in Hebe's blissful arms.  
 Time yet for that. After this dizzy plunge—  
 Nothing shall stay me, not thy soothsay even—  
 When I shall have return'd straightway with foot  
 League-blinding, instantaneous back to Heaven,  
 Having aroused my warrior. But do thou  
 Speak, and speak truly brother, I demand  
 What peril was that thy far off gaze foresaw?  
 And smiling, the bright archer unsurpris'd:  
 'How know'st thou that I see, sister most sage  
 This far off peril whereof thy prudent soul  
 Seems to forewarn thee, or the striding eye  
 And searchlight of thy far-fore-glimpsing shield?  
 Shield, Pallas, which I see not now with thee.'  
 To which with a stern frown the armèd maid:  
 'How? Phoebus! By the sun's own master dazed  
 Not daring to confront frank look for look  
 His sister's eye, but of himself afraid!  
 I have observ'd thee all this while, Apollo,  
 Throw far that visionary look of thine  
 As thou wouldst bridge hush'd lands and wondering seas,  
 With bright enquiry, yon world-ending west  
 To reach where dips thy chariot. Some strange hap  
 It seems in the Hesperides befall'n,  
 Or that sweet golden isle by sunset's marge.  
 What there thou hast surpris'd with bode or ken,  
 Wilt thou not rather to my ear entrust,  
 Athene's prudent ear, the treasury  
 Of secrets. Do : my counsel-keeping breast  
 Not the imperious majesty, thou know'st,  
 That speaks command on Herë's queenly brow



## PERSEUS

Shall wrest from me more than thyself shalt give  
 Authorisation for: Confide in me.  
 Already as thou see'st my soul hath gripp'd  
 Part of thy secret, one great certain fact  
 Of all that works within the Father's mind  
 One flash of foresight with whose tallying ken,  
 Were it not wise, my brother, to confirm  
 Thy far-caught inkle of futurity  
 Why dost thou seem to hesitate, demurring  
 In face of this clear-speaking sign, this grant  
 Of striding foresight into his deep mind  
 To thee and me alone of all Gods given:  
 As 'twere his solemn voice itself that said,  
 "Pallas and thou, Phoebus, make ye what haste  
 Thy prudence, daughter, and thy prescience, son,  
 Can with the strength of thus much foresight given  
 To make plain and prepare the ways of Power  
 Toward that teeming purpose my vast thought  
 Broods to the hatch." Do thou but go, brother,  
 Whole-hearted with me in this world-concern,  
 That touches me so nearly, thou shalt have  
 I swear to thee whenever thou shalt ask  
 Yea, to my own loss even, in thy dear need  
 Me, strength and soul, thy sister and thy friend.  
 So speaking, her divine frank eyes she turn'd  
 For all their beauteous sternness feminine  
 Severe yet sisterly with sweet appeal  
 Up to her glorious brother. But the God,  
 Not even such colour of responding warmth  
 Showing, as over earth's adoring breast,  
 Fires in his coldest sunset, mute remain'd,  
 Mute with the same bright uplift face. Whereat  
 She, murmuring to herself: 'All is not well!  
 What is it? Some Daphne or some Clytie  
 There at the sunset once more tree or flower  
 To draw his westward gaze? Or can it be  
 This wonder of creation, whom heaven's youth  
 Are rivals for, this maid for Perseus meet?'  
 She raising her lower'd tone continued thus:  
 'Do as thou wilt. Only of one thing, seer,  
 Let me forewarn thee lest thou afterward  
 Should'st weakly say, reproaching me, when wrath



### BOOK III

The Father's bickering thunderbolt shall blaze,  
 "And sister, thou didst not by one small word  
 Warn me herein, one whisper in my ear  
 Of seasonable caution." See to it  
 I tell thee now, let no eye-flaming swerve  
 After some face of beauty seen, the sting  
 And flashing pierce of earth's far loveliness  
 Come now betwixt thee and the Father's will  
 Such as oft makes thee over thy gold-car  
 Lean passionately and with sighs bemoan  
 Thy onward plucking horses and the path  
 Unlingerable of the world's great flame  
 Delaying in the afternoon descent  
 The sun itself to sate enamour'd looks!  
 So saying from the sheer-down threshold, brink  
 Of the everlasting mansion down she plung'd,  
 With such a stride the helmèd goddess rush'd  
 You would have said already he was rous'd,  
 She rush'd to rouse, already in her step  
 Discretion rallied and imprudence shrank  
 And ignorance and folly fled afraid.  
 Now in his own despite Apollo griev'd  
 Longing for wisdom's self he had disdain'd,  
 Now she was gone, wishing for her clear look  
 Which rains upon the toss'd heart council, strength  
 Her sister-help frank offer'd. Regretfully  
 He after her arm'd glorious figure gaz'd,  
 Celestial, towering freshness, breathing power,  
 Thought inspiration even to mightiest Gods.  
 Too far for his recalling she was gone.  
 In distance lost the lines of her strong shape,  
 All energy, had melted in the gloom,  
 Made one with the huge pensiveness of Night.  
 So stood he a little, and as still he gazed  
 Such dimness as the sun's gold countenance  
 Veils for a moment, when a summer's clouds  
 Gives to its noonday radiance white eclipse  
 Such through his musing face Apollo dimm'd  
 A moment as he murmur'd. 'It falls out  
 As my soul fear'd. 'Tis Perseus shall go forth!  
 That is the purpose in her dauntless mind  
 She means forthwith to accomplish, having first



## PERSEUS

Disarm'd for this with what sagacity  
 Of shrewdness the bland might that mother's all.  
 But Power's self, but the Father? Shall he then  
 Through her strong plea, and favouring his lov'd son  
 Risk to the courage of a mortal hand  
 Existence, at this world-enmarbling face  
 Trembling in peril. From brooding Power 'tis plain  
 She comes encourag'd from high conference.  
 And to confirm my worst prophetic fear  
 That she to rashness hath omnipotence  
 Over persuaded, brings not back with her  
 Wise glass of history's ferment her fair shield  
 Left with him at request on its sheer face  
 The future to safeguard, ere he despatched  
 His frail heroic favourite. Be it so!  
 Not without check and opposition huge  
 Of every power in heaven: Yea, Herë's self.  
 She soften toward Perseus! 'Tis to wind  
 The Father's pleas'd heart into glad accord  
 With these impossible nuptials she broods  
 Of Ares, her fierce son, relentless war  
 With the sweet soul of sad mortality  
 Crush'd to its delicatest, rarest breath  
 Of perfume, of divine world sympathy,  
 Rich faith, and suffering love, the flower of things,  
 Sun-fondled-rose of creatures, my thoughts food  
 Andromeda. But 'tis another way  
 That prescience to my dreaded rival points.  
 So saying, with his hand upon his lyre  
 Away he turned back to the blissful revel.

Whither fled sleep, whither fled that soft Power  
 World-stilling, when from Iris' side he rose  
 From sentinelling the hush'd awful head  
 Of brooding and thought-task'd omnipotence  
 Where went he spreading his wide dewy wings  
 To deepen slumber o'er the world's unrest.  
 Far as to Oxus river, and where rolls,  
 Where mighty Indus rushes. He had left  
 To fade with ebbing light each noble stream  
 And from Night's gloaming step, the dusk advance  
 Of silence, to drink first of silver rest



### BOOK III

In glassing the bright peace of Hesperus  
 He in the sombre shadow far before  
 Of coming Night went westering in one car  
 With Hesperus, to steady his soft lamp  
 And signal peace to a strife-weary world:  
 With Hesperus high-riding and that power  
 His sister, the gray Evening, she who goes  
 A premonition gray saddening for Night  
 The soul of things, but never without him  
 Never save Sleep stand by, may she have power  
 In her dusk stealing tresses, the rich swoon  
 Of garishness, to wrap the hemisphere  
 She now with sleep for her companion went  
 Stilling Life's riotous pulse, and sobering  
 Down to the languor of her sweet tired smile  
 The farewell gorgeous and loud laughing ebb  
 Of light behind the bright sun's sinking car  
 To pensiveness subduing, fashioning,  
 Framing the face of the fast-fading earth  
 Preparing for the vast, the solemn Night.  
 For what end to Olympus then the hall  
 The everlasting mansion, burgh of bliss,  
 Had they, thus westered what their journey's end?  
 To Herë and the high permitting nod  
 To herald Night, with grand pace nearing now  
 From them to crave the leave each night renew'd  
 Sufferance to her dark sceptre with one last  
 One heavy touch of her eye-muffling power  
 To sink the world's tir'd eyelid. There they found  
 Appalment upon every face at feast  
 And Herë sad on singly sovereign throne.  
 There Sleep unto a function heavenlier  
 Hastened, than any he had left on earth  
 To trance all Nature round the head of Power:  
 Which now, upon that sleepy sward, beneath  
 Tall pines, upon the flowery grass drench'd thro  
 With slumber, to the rainbow vigilance  
 Of Iris, he, relinquishing, rush'd back  
 For the completion upon earth of tasks  
 Yet unfulfill'd; there just where he left off  
 By Oxus's stream and Indus. Now he homed  
 By twos and threes back to their clamorous roost



## PERSEUS

Some lakeside heronry, or mid the reeds  
 Sunk o'er each cygnet the swan's downy wing,  
 Now upon one last mother's weary breast  
 In village of still street rest-perfected  
 He hush'd a fretful infant, then far off  
 Westering with balmy wing made droop the flowers  
 By fountain-side or forest or seal'd up  
 Hurt by the risen moon's soft glare the eye  
 Of the cub-reav'd and groaning lioness ;  
 Or task more high divinely merciful  
 Gave painless passage upon Death's dark wing  
 To what night-prey he makes, the fierce-eyed owl,  
 Night's deathsman, that the roomy purge of things  
 May have no pause suffer'd to Night's dark power,  
 Even as to Day's the eagle's thinning pounce.  
 So the sleep-god upon that tender task  
 The balmy ease of nature, not like his  
 Who is her cease, Death's sternly kind, flew far  
 O'er hither-Asia, her thick-citied west  
 Lulling the populations, there where Zeus  
 His garden planted with the sons of men,  
 Civilisation's cradle, and her rich dawn  
 Still rising. Over many a famous town  
 Already ancient, many a fertile tract  
 He circled, which the ever-shortening sweep  
 Of his infantine wing left plung'd in rest ;  
 Lull'd easily, since not a city-gate  
 But lovely Order guarded, Justice, Peace  
 So call'd on earth, in heaven the bounteous Hours  
 The plenty-giving children of serene  
 Staid Themis: so a light work there sleep found  
 To vindicate the roomy hush of Night.  
 He had behind him realms and empires left  
 From sleepy roar hushed million'd Babylon  
 And mighty Egypt made one mirror'd dream  
 Of column'd temples white and wave-kiss'd stairs  
 And moonlit and deserted palaces.  
 He left the orient dreaming with her palms  
 And onward rush'd to cradle the near West,  
 Queen Herë's holy pale in slumbrous lull  
 As restful. A loud ingrate world he found,  
 From swan-lov'd Asian river dusk with towers



## BOOK III

To sunset isles and the Leucadian leap  
 From pine-dark Ida, nurse of power, now old  
 In glory and dead Minos' regal sleep  
 Cradle of kingship, hundred citted Crete  
 Where sceptred awe first rose to where it sat  
 In Argos by the glide of Inachus,  
 Far as Olympus' foot, was all one noise  
 And stir of war, and rumour of loud war.  
 So here a hard task and a long Sleep found  
 To vindicate the roomy hush of Night  
 Wherever with his whist thought-lulling wand  
 He roam'd for peaceful sleep importunate  
 Up and awake to the alarm of war  
 The ambitious youth of Apian land he found  
 And Crete and lovely Hellas. For the last  
 What then alone was Hellas called, no town  
 White-wall'd or sleepest village he saw there  
 Whether on Ossa's centaur-haunted slopes  
 On pine-girt Pelion, or the sweet vales  
 Of Phthea, but the same war-passion shook.  
 Raw youthful levies by worn veterans led  
 Camp'd by watch fires whom martial exercise  
 All day had left fatigueless: not a lad  
 So callow but fledg'd warrior thoughts, in wake  
 Of that great sailing left green and unripe,  
 And burned to follow after. Those flush'd rings  
 Round many a watchfire glowing beautiful  
 Boyish exultant faces in big talk  
 And fair young limbs impatient to bud strength  
 Bud manhood and in feats of battle bloom  
 Leaping in armour, brandishing bright arms  
 Shaping child-sport to great activity  
 Scarcely might Sleep quell, but he quell'd at last.  
 He, suddenly sweet, a felt need fell on them  
 The drowse of their young natures a loth ease  
 Unwillingly receiv'd. Big act, brave vaunt  
 Sank in the self-same languor. Head to head  
 Shoulder to shoulder those young warriors slept.  
 He left them thus, proud boyhood's soul of fire  
 Beneath subdual of a charm world-old  
 Dreaming to change earth's very face, but lull'd  
 But lock'd from harm. With a disdainful smile



## PERSEUS

The softest of all conquerors arose  
And saw, as he went circling, every way  
The land at rest, all that rude Hellene folk  
Rudest of peoples in the dawn of time  
Who were to name civilization's self  
That vigorous young nation fast asleep:  
Its boyhood. For its pith and hardihood  
These had already sail'd from Pagasae  
Launch'd in that tall fleet Polydectes led  
And Mermeros and Azan and the bulk  
Of Ptoliporthides and Pelops, king  
Of Pisa now, whom from her new-wed arms  
To mightier sway aspiring she had sent  
Herself, his life-risk'd peril-won young wife  
Hippodameia. Against them Sleep smiled  
As he shook wide his dewy wings a smile  
Triumphant, menaceful of mastery  
Dim dreamy fathomless power curled all his lip  
As he remember'd what the Queen of things  
Had charged him. On toward her holy bower  
They sail'd those towering hulls by heroes driven  
Plunging and foaming onward but his prey  
Not without cause he gloried in his strength  
Having such scope to bind down and to chain  
In his captivity of quiet breath  
The loud peace-shattering trumpet which to him  
So hateful was, nay, Ares' clanging stride  
Stay'd in those ships, war's rattling threat compell'd  
To anchor in his port of strengthless calm.  
Yet was his heavenly task but half complete  
He had to moor upon as calm a wave  
That menaced capital, once heart of peace  
Imperial ancient Argos. Her shook towers  
Tumultuously were arming 'gainst approach  
Of rebel inroad hourly waited for  
By watchers upon lonely look-out crags  
High in the mountains where but eagles gyre  
Bluff crags that catch the wind commandingly  
In prospect of the trembling sea-levels.  
Thence the red beacon's wavering eye of dread  
Had all day flung mute fiery messages  
Toward the capital city. Thitherward



## BOOK III

Rush'd the Sleep-God to quiet all alarm  
In stealing bands of languor he surprised  
Those steady watchers with their sleepless eyes  
And heaping for them the dry heather high  
No need for them to stir, he, promising,  
A secure hour for that time, by their fires  
Down by their roaring fires laid them asleep.  
Then he o'ertook with all his whispering stealth  
The alarm-spied foot of the swift messenger  
Dreamy dissimulation in his ear  
Pouring, through every sleep-desiring sense  
How Perseus self was coming with the strength  
Of island arms his own great heritage  
To fend and safeguard, and how sleep was sweet,  
Sleep on the wayside grass to weary limbs  
So on the wayside grass he left him sunk  
Nor did the Sleep-God need another charm  
Than that, the magical heroic name  
Of Perseus their young prince, exiled so long  
After so long coming, their deep desire  
No other spell than that did he require  
To hush and to lay flat a capital  
That sovereign population through long power  
Ease-loving, haughty, confident of calm.  
On all roads, as he flew, broadcast he sow'd  
From lip to lip the dread-allaying bruit  
Rumour of Perseus coming, so that now  
When he reach'd Argos' fluttered walls and towers  
He found not there at each high-archèd gate  
Pacing, a people's wrath, suspense, alarm  
With sentry foot and ear-strain'd vigilance  
Eager to capture the least startled rouse  
Of rumour murmuring up on the hill-road.  
In other and much altered mood he found  
Those men-at-arms from stern attention ceased  
Pacing with dreamier gait and stride relaxed  
Looking for the relief-guard with no thought  
But couch and sup and slumber. And within  
All as completely to the hand of Sleep  
Had his forg'd tidings wrought to ease for him  
His labour. It made reel the imperial town  
From wrath, fear and suspense to revelry



## PERSEUS

Tuned as it was to their hearts hope, it sent  
 The city through, with swaying heads of revel  
 Through the flush'd thoroughfare with song and pipe  
 In joy's rebound to join the giddy whirl  
 Of news-drunk rumour-fed expectancy  
 The glad heart of a nation: whom with ease  
 Those festal crowds all jollity, he laid  
 To sleep, the gluttoned thoroughfares emptying  
 Hushing wide Argos through a thousand streets  
 Lulling to rest that old metropolis  
 An empire's heart, still'd now at every pulse.  
 But the grim heart of pulsing fear and hate  
 In the emperor of all that mighty sway  
 In old Acrisius, not so easily  
 Might Sleep find means out of his dreamy craft  
 Sweet whispering deception weave to still  
 The agitation of an ancient dread  
 A monarch's apprehension. Means he found  
 And still'd at last. Suddenly soft he stood  
 Before him, rich with all the healing charm  
 And solace of oblivion that drips  
 And breathes from him. With care-benumbing hand  
 He touched him and in voice most soothing said:  
 'Poor gray old king, what dost thou at this hour  
 Vainly thyself tormenting, lean'd to catch  
 Shouts that still echo in thy aged ear  
 The name, the magical heroic name  
 Of Perseus, thy grandson? From street to street  
 It thrill'd with exultation every soul  
 That name well lov'd, thy people's hope, to grasp  
 The sceptre and succession after thee  
 This spacious headship and hegemony  
 Of Argos over the Pelasgian pale  
 Their hope, their pride, whose rumour'd home-return  
 From lip to lip in jaculation rife  
 Even now did chill thee to the bone, rebarb'd  
 A twenty-year-old-terror. But in vain  
 Thou darest. What edge in that name can Time  
 Out of his murderous cloak of years let gleam  
 Still of the foretold dagger. Time hath ta'en  
 The blunted sting from those dull'd oracles  
 The laggar'd-pacing doom that threats so loud



### BOOK III

But never comes. No substance hath it, none,  
 That ineffectual falchion held in air  
 To fright thee! Have I not told thee as much  
 These twenty years, each night in thine old ear  
 So hard to be persuaded, whispering  
 The threat as worthless, marshalling, each night  
 To a still unasassinated sleep  
 Upon imperial pillow, that white head  
 Let but its venerable snows persuade  
 And Sleep's own tongue with balmy counsel wise  
 And Perseus' noble heart that thou compose  
 This tossing on the sides of one vain dread  
 This apprehension unmajestical  
 That shakes thee, base, unworthy to disturb  
 Betwixt the gorgeous curtains that fold in  
 The calm deep breathing of an Inachid  
 Such as thou art or shouldst be, Abas' son  
 No weakling sluiced from that heroic line  
 Whose dreams I know unanxious. Not for this  
 Such fear unkinglike and realm-ruining  
 Westered the sails of Danaüs and from Nile  
 With frailest oarage of arms feminine  
 To brave the storm, those maid-soft fifty who  
 Over the ship-sides look'd so fearfully  
 To see the foamy churn their pull'd strokes made  
 To make home backward deep in Memphian lore  
 The wandered foot of Io. This way then  
 Softly: lift thou thy fear-unfettered feet!  
 To the dear couch that waits thee, whose driven down  
 Thy pressure to receive, one of that mighty line  
 I have with softest comfort, thoughts care-pluck'd  
 Nay thoughtless deep insouciance complete  
 Feather'd, such silence from the raven depth  
 Of my day-thieving pinion, as I use  
 To stuff and quilt the slumber of a king,  
 For the large ease of kingdoms, and for dreams  
 Realm-wide his individual pillow smooth  
 With my own hands, tuck in his coverlet  
 Of quiet, and an empire hush to sleep.  
 So saying gently that old emperor  
 Sleep by the hand led, and to steal away  
 The dim felt awe, the supernatural fear



## PERSEUS

Of a celestial presence, weird mistrust  
 To soothe, the smiling countenance put on  
 Of him who was his trusted chamberlain  
 His bosom's casket, key of his affairs  
 He who alone the lonely old man lov'd  
 That grim much dreaded tyrant, lovingly  
 Served, woman almost to his every need  
 Peitheas his name, Eupaethes' faithful son  
 Feigning whose trusted and familiar touch  
 With sweet persuasive pressure by the hand  
 Couchward Sleep led him. Of his diadem  
 And regal staff he eased the monarch frail  
 And he, who to a guidance so down-soft  
 Scarcely perceptible had yet each pace  
 Each tottering, feeble, but imperial step  
 Resisting come, an old man's testiness,  
 A monarch's obdurate pride to seem compell'd  
 Now sighing as he saw a friend's face smile  
 Sank back, with the sweet stupor overcome  
 On gorgeous couch imperial; yet with look  
 Dreamily doubtful of the god's dim face  
 So strange yet so familiar said to him  
 'Is it thou, friend? Or do my agèd eyes  
 Mistake in this dim-lighted gorgeousness  
 In deep of midnight, half with sleep o'ercome  
 Even now thou speak'st: With such soft eloquence  
 Thy voice came, that it seemed the very tone  
 And whispering adjuration of the power  
 Who reigns at this still time over the world  
 Pursuading me to slumber. Heardst thou then  
 These shouts? What! Stand the sentinels on guard  
 Down the gloom'd passages and that steep stair  
 Which leads up to my solitary tower,  
 Five at each post;—let them be doubled, friend!  
 Arcadians all, wag'd hirelings true as steel  
 And steel'd from kinship with those mutinous cries  
 (Ah, Argives fram'd of all disloyalty)  
 Which shiver'd up toward me, and with wrath  
 (Traitors! ingrates!) made rush the imperial blood  
 To my old heart, an emperor's still to wreck  
 Its wrath,—severely punish. But that shout  
 Hark, hear'st thou it? Nay, now 'tis silence all!



## BOOK III

Were those indeed terrestrial syllables  
That shook the midnight, such as mortal lips  
Might frame, that cry, Perseus! Perseus is come!  
And not rather, (to thee, friend, I unlock  
The worst of fears,) my sentence by the powers  
Of Hell announced and demons of the dark.  
O but it pierced and beat at this thin gate  
That porches my gray heart, knocking to say  
'Tis thy doom emperor! And 'tis my doom  
I feel it, Peitheas, coming in that tread  
Heard hourly now, since that day when thy tongue  
Thy gentle tongue, breaking harsh tidings, slew  
Yea, murder'd me thrice over, but to say  
Thy grandson lives! yet lives, thou then didst add  
Didst haste to pour in my hurt ear this balm,  
A bann'd perpetual exile. Never, king,  
Shall he the fearful sentence to fulfil  
Which yet appals thee, tread this Argive earth  
We have sent over mighty emperor!  
So thus didst thou reassure me, to thy slave  
Even to king Dictys, with whom now he bides.'



## BOOK IV

As for Athene such good speed she made  
Wing'd with the force of her own mighty thoughts  
That she in a few strides had reached, in one  
League-blinding flash seas, mountains marrying,  
Rocky Seriphos, and that city old  
Grey Olpae, over the vast rampart sprang  
And right within among deep grass and flowers  
Upon that whispering lawn of cypresses  
The temple precincts of her own great Sire  
Stood over her loved hero. Fast he slept  
In slumber's downy armour laced with ease ;  
Lapp'd in that dead Lethean stirlessness  
Sleep's heavy self had cased him, and the chafe  
Of three nights' wakeful arm'd activity.  
No force, it seemed, could move, once lulled, such strength.  
But the immortal energy who spans  
In herself foresight, strength, courage, resource,  
Not much of force she needed to make spring  
Up from the Thunderer's sward, with sembable  
Like upleap as she sprang from his deep brain,  
Her's and the Father's champion. She stood  
With a soft smile gazing upon his face  
Just as a mother might her slumbering son's  
Who, as she stands and lilts his cradled sleep  
Rocks, dandles in her mind his life to come  
Teasing with her fond heart futurity  
To shape his dream'd course for him: With such joy  
As mothers feel and moons are mistress of  
Swaying her way Time's mighty tide she thinks  
Thus I would have him, thus will I build up  
My dauntless prince, my warrior to fight out  
The battles of his father. Even so smiled  
Athene, as she stood o'er Perseus' sleep,  
With such emotion, like that mother, tranced  
She over Perseus yearn'd than were he born  
Her flesh and bone. Nay with far loftier surge  
Of such emotion because sane, her heart  
Having admitted that sweet brotherhood



# BOOK IV

With pain and sorrow and frail human flesh  
 Went sistering in heavenly sympathy  
 Her man of men ; longing as he lay there,  
 Yearning to shape for him his perilous road,  
 With difficulty hard, danger immense  
 Beset,—peril of the air which he must tread  
 For his familiar highway, and for foes  
 Titanic peril, in that world-ending West  
 With ruse and treachery of fallen powers hemmed in  
 And worse, the ever-watchful jealousy  
 Of those two, the august bretheren of Zeus,  
 Strong rulers of this lower orb, and dead  
 Against his going, bent with the blue shield  
 Of all Poseidon's vast dominion  
 To thwart him, and the nether glooms of Dis.  
 'Twas for a moment thate she thus gave way  
 To her great heart's compassionate swell of ruth  
 For now the next with her celestial lance  
 Ever so lightly on the wrist she touched  
 Her sleeper. As though fire should in the moon  
 Through Zeus' great alter dropping on dead sticks  
 One ember, a live flame leap suddenly,  
 So in his burning armour Perseus leaped  
 And clutched his sword-hilt and to Pallas said :  
 ' What art thou that in dead of night intrud'st  
 Upon this awful presincts whose dim sward  
 Should warn thee with its solemn cypress-shade  
 And oaks wide-branch'd, of girth gigantical  
 Peopled with whisper, grand and ghostly glooms  
 As only in that yet far older dusk  
 Dove-haunted, Dodonaean. Stranger thou art  
 Else wert thou native here, and knew'st what place  
 This is, the sacred and religious fear  
 Of tongue-tied passers, and yon cemetery  
 Slab-strewn with mouldering tombstones, held of us  
 In no less awe remembering what they guard  
 The bones and the dead dreams of mighty men  
 Our dread forefathers whose big-handed toil  
 Ribb'd and piled up these ramparts to the sky,  
 This hadst thou known, thou never at such hour  
 Hadst dared this silence of religious shade  
 Being here a native. But why goest thou back?



## PERSEUS

Behind thee is the beetling precipice  
 And I before with my drawn resolute sword  
 Tush! man, retiring before me afraid?  
 And thou of such large stature haughty helm'd,  
 Thou'dst have me almost think thee of the tombs  
 And fear'st me to suppose thee phantom-risen  
 A ghost of that gigantic age, long dead.  
 Fear not, I say, I love thee, be thou man  
 Such admiration warms me but to sense  
 Thy bulk dim-seen. Why, 'tis such men as thou  
 I want, so sized after my very heart  
 Dowered with such strength by my side to war down  
 Yon rebels, though a hilding pack they be  
 Who with the borrow'd pith of Pelion came  
 But for faint heart sheer'd off gave me the slip.  
 Or beest thou no terrestrial shape, which earth  
 Coins, and our eyes pass current, but a spirit  
 Of those rude mighty ages dreaming here  
 Disdainful in a grand oblivion  
 Of us, dwarf'd pigmies of these lesser times.  
 Now haply stirred from that great apathy  
 In indignation of thy country's peril  
 Burst from the tomb some counsel to impart—  
 Speak! for I stand upon the stretch to hear.  
 The last word had not left the hero's lip,  
 When from the shade his own dear goddess towered  
 A glorious apparition in the moon:  
 A brief space to give breath to his surprise  
 She stood before his awe-astonished eyes  
 Then thus abrupt accosted: 'Hear thou shalt  
 No counsel such as death and dreaming dust  
 'Neath this millennial umbrage risen might speak  
 In aidance of the dear war-menaced sod  
 Things of far loftier import, prince of men  
 Most dauntless my heart's hero and the world's  
 Such fame shalt thou earn by thy own great deeds  
 Sovereign communication to impart  
 I come to thee from our great Father sped  
 Fraught with high hest, his solemn great command.  
 How is it, Perseus, that thou knew'st me not?  
 Or sloth was it? Nay, never sloth in thee  
 My warrior, train'd in vigil, fight, alarm





## BOOK IV

Or loth fatigue from three night's wakeful toil  
As I think, rather, marshalling defence  
That cast thee in this perilous sleep, though arm'd.  
Be warn'd; for that great fleet, Pelion's tall woods  
In embarcation 'monish'd to lop thee  
Not for nothing it swerved westward away  
Shame on those craven Aiolids! a ruse!  
A ruse, Perseus, shall steal their navy back  
With muffled oars the better to surprise  
And storm by night these unsuspecting towers.  
Undaunted he heard that with bitten lip  
For all the overjoy'd wonder, delight,  
Storming through him, that she came, curtly saying:  
'And welcome! they give me my heart's desire  
Nor, goddess, hast thou school'd me neither up  
In slights of war so witless, as to sleep  
Without shrewd caution taken. I have couched  
(Thought, inspiration breathed by whom but thee  
Thou mother-wit of captains, nurse of plot  
And strategem) full fifty companies  
In that high gorge commands the shoreward road  
Who have strict charge to let, if land they dare,  
The first and the fool-hardest,—let these  
Rush on before, leaving to me to deal  
With their fury,—but those post'd to cut off  
With headlong interception floundering them  
The rest, with strong flung ranks holding the glen,  
Dividing midway that tremendous host  
Shrilly announced with far blown trumpet-call  
Blast upon blast reiterate. Soon I look  
To hear that piercing summons. But how far  
Didst thou behind thee then leave the labouring hulk  
To make slow headway in this breathless calm.  
Slow, fast I reck not, let the question pass.  
Say, rather, for 'tis that I burn to know  
What is it incommunicably grand  
Irks thee to hold: which on thy glowing cheek  
Smoulders like day, the coming glorious day  
With all its glad free scope, thought, pleasure, joy  
And action rein'd in that strong fiery leap  
Apollo's burning brilliance, lest it overwhelm  
At one stride Night, in the still rosy strength



## PERSEUS

Pent, the cold calm of all Aurora's face.  
 Speak, for the crisis of my fate is come  
 The turn of this long ebb-tide. Let me not  
 For ignorance on thy rock of silence burst,  
 In my own fretted sprays showered away.  
 Sovereign impartment saidest thou, and to me?  
 Bring me to know it, though half I guess its scope  
 This message from the Father. What is it?  
 Flood its import in one word on my ear  
 Drown me in that deep roll of thunder-sound.  
 Is it, shame to me I should rejoice  
 In that should pierce me to the heart with grief  
 My grandsire's death? O, by no stroke of mine  
 Fall'n in the natural course of ripe decay?  
 Sole-sounding crash in the wide forest-depths  
 Of Argos' regnant oak, long mouldering,  
 Not my axe to the root then? Those grand glooms  
 Cower'd down an empire, kept in jealous shade  
 His own sun-exiled sapling? Yes, thou com'st  
 To lead me to my life's work, goddess dear!  
 No more a prisoner in this stormy isle!  
 Hence—for the manacles are off my hands  
 Unfettered now I leap upon my feet.  
 Toward Argos is it? My great heritage  
 No longer to disown my rightful tread.  
 Life, life before me and to fill with deeds!  
 What first, Goddess? Wash out the bloody curse  
 That stains it to its very stones so deep.  
 The Danaïd sisters' crime, writ in our race?  
 No more shall it harden the father's heart  
 To drown his own lov'd daughter, terribly  
 Weapon ere birth the grandchild against grandsire,  
 Pit brother against brother, over walls  
 Unneighbourly, fraternal claws unsheath'd  
 To fight twin-lions, struggled from one womb.  
 All that to obliterate, blood and hate and guilt  
 Have we not settled, Pallas, thou and I  
 Removing, a clean slate, on some new site  
 Virgin of history and tears, to build  
 The larger Argos, Tiryns mightier tower'd.  
 Is that the Father's message? Say is it?  
 Speak in one word and quickly, linger not out



## BOOK IV

In an age-long protraction of suspense  
 Terror, awe, pity and joy most dreadful—dead?  
 Fiercely he spoke: but calm, mild, unmov'd she:  
 'Not so, Perseus; for thy grandfather lives.  
 Hale still nor to the frailty of his years  
 Yielding one jot, long is he like to live.  
 But for those splendid towers thou art to build  
 Famous already in the talk of gods,  
 Not blood-stain'd, old and faded in the moon  
 Or when the rare sun shuddering looks within  
 Those fifty bride-bowers, save whence thou wast sluiced  
 Down-glorying from the tear drop, nobly true  
 Lone, friendless as thyself yet far more firm  
 A single horror and to dye thy hand  
 Shall for purgation drive, the very name  
 Of Argos grown a loathing in thy ear  
 Thee, fatal man, to quarry and rear up  
 The walls of that new virgin capital.  
 Little did I imagine thee so weak  
 As wish the unalterable fix'd decree  
 Pronounc'd thee to stave off or think reprieve  
 Not rather with calm face eyed steadily  
 Before thee, with prepar'd strong soul to dare  
 That deed abhorrent and of thee unwill'd  
 In the blind rage and swirl of accident  
 Undauntedly to suffer. Nemesis  
 Older than Zeus perhaps to counterpoise  
 The swelling flood of thy great life permits  
 This ebb towards the dark abysmal prime  
 That thou elate with half of godhead, may'st  
 The more with mortal sorrow sympathise  
 Or else that some too whole and perfect joy  
 Not blind thee up in towering thoughts, she slits  
 And windows with this one fatality  
 That ecstasy, in thy shot-skein of bliss  
 Suffers this dark thread hue'd by their wise hands  
 The mystic Fates who in the shadow spin  
 Throned nightly by their mighty mother Night  
 Progenitress of sorrow: She it is  
 Shall send forth in that hour her sweet son sleep  
 Instinct in thee, blood's warning to benumb,  
 That thou know not thy grandsire, while grim Death



## PERSEUS

And the Dream-powers who fill the minds of men  
 With false thoughts, and direct to all mischance  
 Swerve thee to kill the unseen gray old man.  
 And wrathfully in re-embittered pain  
 To feel the laggard and tear-drenching pace  
 Of kindred blood stride on him once again  
 The hero, disappointed of his hope:  
 'Then killing be it, since to kill alone  
 Seems all my lot, the swelling tide of deeds  
 Thou paintest for me, my shot-skein of bliss  
 Shot through with the grim shine and hue of steel.  
 Nothing but steel! Sword, steel me to it then  
 This great hest from the Father thou delay'st,  
 To my pall'd ear from better hope, this chart  
 Sublime, what terrible emprise it be  
 Still in his crashing thunder's sulphurous targe  
 To kill, slay! Unto that dimly thy words  
 And sternness of celestial calm portend.  
 But what or whom? As for these snarling hounds  
 That bay the Argive lion, for these rebels  
 Their doom nothing shall linger, no, nor his  
 My long life-cherished, still debarr'd revenge.  
 Polydectes! Never shalt thou persuade  
 Me Goddess, for him, exploit however grand  
 Beams from thee, him, my ancient mortal foe  
 To let go, now that he at last comes in  
 Thinks under covering shield of ships and men  
 To cope me, runs into my very clutch.  
 He first despatch'd, then to whatever quell  
 Thou wouldst lead me. Yet surely did I think  
 What cruel mystery may in the deaths  
 Of men be learnt, in Ares guild to hew  
 This suffering copy of mortality  
 Wherein immortal rapture fram'd me half,  
 (They too have mothers) surely I did deem  
 To quit this dreadful commerce in men's tears  
 My term, the hardening indenture out  
 In war and battle, conflict, thy severe school  
 Mistress celestial, having served through  
 To earn exemption from the shoals of youth  
 On wider waters the franchise to have  
 Of my curb'd spirit's groaning liberty



# BOOK IV

Than in the fretted, reef'd, pent-in confine  
 Of these few rocks, this petty isle, where thou  
 Dost boulder and shore in my towering hope  
 To pace these inches, envy the sea-gull  
 While wings of eagle longing sprout in me  
 To see on the horizon's verge white sails  
 Go tossing, and on me in mockery glint  
 Cities and men, the adventurous great world  
 All that my ban, broad ocean, with blue grant  
 Of his free swelling wave charters her to,  
 A hundred ports of profit, action, ease.  
 While with clench'd fists I pace and pace, and spurn  
 The stones before me, eat my heart away  
 How long am I, Pallas, how long to roam  
 These miserable limits, fed with curb  
 Glutted with limit, chafed with island wars  
 True, in his right my foster-father good  
 And my sore-wrought sad mother to defend  
 Yet O how shrunken paltry seems it all.  
 Discipline, thou say'st, unto quenchless fire  
 First needful exercise in narrow bounds  
 This poor petty palaestra for a course  
 Such as to run never athletic might  
 Yet ventured as my force thus train'd shall run  
 Time's girded athlete and to round a goal  
 The world for my arena scarce shall serve  
 So still thou say'st to my impatient hope  
 While I feel in me heaven-sprung energy  
 Waste rather, like this sour-fruit olive wild  
 Or that surf-breaker that in violence still  
 Bursts and foams over in a crude yeast of sprays  
 Verily when I saw thee did I deem  
 When thou from under yon dark cypress cam'st  
 Thus helmeted in splendour, thou for that  
 Wast come, to strip me for the wondrous race  
 Or else the calmer speed, the gentler might  
 Such as yon blue severity of peace  
 Gives hint of,—government—the mighty pace  
 Pomp and procession rather of all things  
 The stars and heaven, the season and the hour  
 With which he moves, my Father in his task'd  
 World sovereignty with swerveless motion grand



# PERSEUS

On Atlas' shoulder propping thin weak Heaven  
 Trampling rebellion, Titan anarchy  
 Down in the deeps, infinite power, benign  
 To mix mercy with justice, temper law  
 To our frail ignorance—pattern for kings  
 To copy, model their rude sway upon.  
 Would Goddess thou had rather come for that  
 To help me rule the empire of my sires  
 Dimly to image in the better'd sway  
 Of that sore-ruffled ocean some small part  
 Of wisdom caught from world-task'd sovereignty  
 With patience to subserve the slow, sure pace  
 That guides his purposes, patience divine  
 World-task'd majestic patience with whose step  
 Must time in unison the dance of things,  
 All the calm operations of the orb  
 And man's advance this history-fretted might  
 Which thou hast told me o'er and o'er it lay  
 Upon me and our own vext Argive realm  
 Largely to further,—push with mighty pace  
 That purpose on for which Europa roamed  
 And Danaüs westered, hand that mighty torch  
 The sunrise of the nations, Babylon,  
 Mother of man, civilization's nurse  
 That burning thought of God risen in the East  
 West to lands foresting in ancient night  
 On to the ending shores and isles of the sea  
 Toward this mighty goal, thou said'st, was bent  
 The pace of my forefathers. On that course  
 Let me run Goddess, in their mighty track,  
 Right for the glorious goal, a lighter weight  
 Yet they flagg'd not, thought-loaded with the care  
 Of kingdoms though with such dire handicap  
 They ran with the dark fate, the heavy curse  
 Of our race overweighted, inbred crime  
 That burden that inheritance of woe.  
 Sager than Danaüs and than Lyceus well  
 Had I ruled, yea, after thy very thought  
 Didst thou but give me aid 'tis all I ask  
 Fresh scope, those dream-built maiden towers I see  
 Receding and receding from my grasp.  
 Indignant syllables, tense with the hope



# BOOK IV

We chafe in, the long frustrate impatient dream  
 Of the wide earth yearning for its full bliss  
 Went quivering through the darkness. With pain'd stress  
 Its rifted sombre glooms to sympathise  
 Oaks of the Thunderer, that had seen and felt  
 The hundred fret of ages, murmuring  
 In grievèd aspiration with his son.  
 Yet as the stars but shine over man's fire  
 Dumb, nor once oracle to his distress  
 Sad eager questioner on the shore of things  
 The mystery, the secret that is theirs  
 To unriddle to him, restless under-spark  
 Vext, burning through a soul's night black as theirs  
 With sad tormented brilliance: Over him  
 So grandly inarticulate to go  
 Severe and hinting splendours liberal  
 To speak to him of the world's alien fate  
 The far cold glories of this huge design  
 Yet for his racked, near kindred ardour dumb  
 To his soul's lift enquiry they unlock  
 At the consulted brightness of their gaze  
 Nothing, but shine mute and majestic on  
 So Pallas hung o'er Perseus' fire, and said:  
 'In short space dost thou think, Perseus, to end  
 What the high labouring Wisdom, ever at work  
 Groaning in ceaseless travail with the world  
 Devising, planning though with gods to help  
 Through countless ages scarcely hath begun  
 Know'st thou then the world-hindered pain and check  
 Of that majestic patience? And wouldst thou  
 Who frettest in thy Father's severe school  
 Of pause and check, this isle cliff-bastion'd, lash'd  
 By the white breakers, where he would but fledge  
 His nursling to soar up against the sun  
 Thou that dost spurn the stones before thy foot  
 And for impatience eat thy heart away,  
 Thou, Perseus, think to image his high calm  
 And can'st not for those promised towers of thine  
 Wait but the quarreying of Time, the sure  
 Clean hewing of the seaside—yet they wait  
 Those patient stones, shaped, fashioned by the years  
 The years, Perseus, old Kronos' children slow



## PERSEUS

Mute, loitering masons who to patience come  
 Swiftening and thronging twelve-handed stone cutters  
 'Tis they, destiny's workmen who for dream  
 And aspiration build, by thy bold thought  
 Conjur'd to our admiring orders, builds  
 Already in the distance those dim towers  
 But not without thou earn her, of herself  
 Will she come, that fate-building city, run  
 To thee inevitably, though fore-doomed,  
 Terribly in thy own tears must thou build  
 And sweat big anguish quarreyed from thy brow  
 In thy own toil to square out the earn'd stones  
 Of thy soul's rest, that city. Nay thou must  
 Hire thee out first God's labourer in a field  
 Far other than thou dreamest, acre wild  
 Plough first, his roughening wave to reap thy port,  
 The calm for which thou hung'rest. 'Twas for that  
 I came, to shape thee to this dreadful thing,  
 Emprise most terrible, I name not yet  
 Since I find thee scarce fit for this grim thing  
 Thou hast to do, the perils thou hast to pass  
 Sighing for peace. Thou Perseus! And not leap,  
 Grasp at the offer of a dangerous thing.  
 But Perseus thou art not! my Perseus? no,  
 Never that hero! Seed of the Thunderer, speak!  
 What is it I must say with downcast brow,  
 And cheek the while blushing celestial shame  
 When I stand dumb before him? What report  
 Of thee, when I return, as straight I must,  
 To tell him how I found thee?—That his son  
 His dauntless, shall I say, his fearless son,  
 Word me, the pleaded letter of excuse,  
 Shall I say this of thee, "Father, thy son  
 Prays from the difficult exploit release,  
 This all too dazzling, dim imagined thing  
 Thou dashest on him glorying"—O let not  
 Grieving Omnipotence cloud up from me  
 In a sad burning sunset of amaze,  
 Shame, anger on the high countenance, "'tis true  
 Thy flower of men, thy Perseus, whom I trained  
 From boyhood up in dangers, toils, alarms  
 Rejects, ere-named, this great and terrible deed





## BOOK IV

Turns recreant to the grandeur of his fate,  
Anticipates even in my face defeat,  
Shrinks, Father, from the undelivered freight  
Of a thing too burdensome with blood and death  
That speaks to him in the hardness of my face  
Some curve mistrusted on my silent lip  
To load with hesitation his prompt foot  
And in abhorrence swerve from this great thing.  
Never have I yet named it to him, nor more  
Than barely, indescribably but breathed,  
Darkly but to his thrill'd adventurous hope  
But hinted in strange whisper, not to stale  
Beforehand to his young fore-tasting fire,  
Not the huge pity of Titanic dooms  
Fear, horror-curdling beauty—all at once  
To burst upon a ear terrestrial.  
And now that on communication's edge  
On brink to hear of this great feat he reels  
Dizzy to think ere spoken things more strange  
Fierce, piteous than his steel'd heart can sustain  
Deem not, O Father, that this matchless man  
Turns on the banner of advance his back  
Skulks in the rear, the coward of his hope  
Fails abjectly, dishonourably fails  
No, he but nourishes a mightier dream  
Peace, peace, thy blue severity of peace  
Which not in one day, Father, but with toil  
Of infinite years, with Themis sage to help  
And steadfast Nemesis, nor till the day  
With heavenly Herë, thinking to knit the world  
Thou the sister-sweet espousal didst contract  
Was that blue peace made perfect, peace upon  
The strong foundation the unwearied upward strain  
Of Atlantean shoulders. That high peace  
Walls yet the virgin city of his hope  
Is what he dreams to mirror down from towers  
Merged with the empyrean. Hasten then  
Time, the slow architect to lay for him  
In his new capital, squared to his thought  
At once the corner-stone of the world-bliss!  
Which is thy dream, O Father, still planned out  
Through the long ages, and with ceaseless urge



## PERSEUS

Of thy creative, thy almighty will  
 Still passionately pondered, still to build  
 In cloud-like dynasties of drifting kings  
 In city after city crumbling down  
 Yet to thy hope, laboriously rebuilt  
 Till it square thy immeasurable end  
 Perfection, which bliss-dream'd in Earth's dark breast  
 Thou would'st draw forth, no crooked primal iron  
 The which forg'd darkly in her vengeful breast  
 Ancestral Earth, to maim her consort Heaven  
 Steeled Kronos with, no, but thy golden dream  
 Plan, out of brooding deep beneficence  
 Mined and projected by thy labouring thought  
 Into the rude material thou work'st in  
 The world, this wrestling and reluctant mass  
 This after-heave and swell of anarchy  
 He left thee to inherit, the bequeathed  
 Hard legacy of his Heaven-wounding hand.  
 Perfection and world-wide is what he dreams  
 Forcing Fate's hands to plant and sow and reap  
 Hear but his boundless ardour and reward  
 Cancel, I pray, the dreadful interdict  
 His grandsire's blood that keeps him from that grand  
 That matchless consummation. Sire, he means  
 The sun-burst of thy arduous bright thought  
 Perfection, in that orient morn of man  
 Dawn'd golden in the east to carry west  
 Far as the sunset. And for that recants  
 Obedience, nature, nurture, dares to be  
 The splendid rebel of his own self-will  
 To his great Father's wish refractory."  
 Say, is it thus thou would'st my pleading tongue  
 In false advocacy of thy fault.  
 What shall I stammer forth in thy excuse?  
 She frown'd as she spoke thus; to which the prince  
 Astonish'd, not abash'd, perplex'd yet bold:  
 'Thou shalt not to the Father, with report  
 So vile of me! I will not let thee go!  
 Nor shalt thou from my unconfessing tongue  
 Pluck exculpation I find not in me  
 To offer. Fault! What fault? For no pale tinct  
 Of cowardice I'm sure couldst thou detect



# BOOK IV

Or shielding cover of a guilty blush  
 On my cheek, that thou this charge hurl'st in my teeth  
 Which but to think of I disdain and spurn.  
 Turn recreant, didst thou say? And to a trust  
 Sublime like that,—thrills to my heart with love  
 Awe, solemn-binding duty even to tears  
 That he should find me worth his glorious trust  
 Care from his infinite solicitude  
 Of worlds to turn upon me those tax'd eyes,  
 An atom in the vastness single out,  
 Risk for a fragment small the whole design:  
 But by that minute's swerve from providence  
 Plunged in the world's life, that great Fatherhood  
 Of all things to become in special mine!  
 Mine, Pallas, my great Father! O that rain  
 That awful gold, that glory! Is it true  
 Or is it an addition vain that men  
 Give to my fame, and thou goddess, as well  
 To call me mortal, very son of Zeus.  
 Or is it as my saner reason oft  
 Chill'd in the dulling clash with circumstance  
 The strength of dreaming ardour sobers down  
 To my doubt, is it that veil'd Power  
 A dim inexorable Justice in things which works  
 Which surely secretly knows how to right  
 Easily all wrongs, by some wondrous means  
 To her eyes visioning his mystic ways  
 Friendled the lone harsh-prisoned maidenhood  
 Of my gold sainted mother, glorified  
 To herself as the dream'd high bride of Zeus.  
 Zeus whose creative passion wills no rift  
 Crack, fissure his beneficence not fills  
 Zeus who the widow weds the orphan sires  
 Miraculously bridegroom'd her lone heart  
 And me, her child and mystery's poor waif  
 Wreck of my grandsire's wrath adopted his  
 The fatherless, the helpless. Yet fame thought  
 Weak, dubious flaw'd terrestrial parentage  
 To be the darkling stealth and snatch (base taunts  
 My foes fling at me) of I know not whom.  
 Can'st thou be the enkindling spark, the spur  
 To mightiest endeavour, this grim thing



## PERSEUS

Whate'er it be, exploit celestial  
 With heavenly consummation fraught, with boon  
 To the wide world, great action's aftermath  
 Since from the Father of all things it comes  
 His thunder that high threatens, but to bring rain  
 His lightning that stabs heaven but for earth's good  
 Can mortal lineage fire me to it then.  
 Aye, to its fierceness, that, perhaps! stern deed  
 To be accomplish'd by a heart Earth-hard  
 A hand Earth-stain'd in each new act of blood  
 To make burst forth afresh the gash she gave  
 To Uranus, re-wound ethereal heaven.  
 No, I will none of thee, earth-born belief  
 Faint-hearted, hesitating grope that creep'st  
 With reason, mazed in the environing  
 Huge night, poor caution reeling back to earth  
 Discouraged the safe earth it cannot fledge  
 Wings from, dull fact and probability!  
 Be thou rather to me my guiding truth  
 Eyeless conviction that lead'st on the bold  
 Dream-daring grandeur of impossible things  
 Thou faith majestic, suck'd with Danaë's milk  
 Caught from her upward rapt adoring look  
 When she bade me my childish hands uplift  
 In awful prayer to the wide heaven, this arch  
 That hid from me my Father and the world's  
 In solemn deep assured serenity  
 That I indeed from sovereign Thunder sluice  
 Saying, "Some day, Perseus, thou shalt behold  
 Tarry, have patience! the invisible  
 Glory and might of him who is thy Sire  
 Not face to face, no man can do and live  
 But in some mighty exploit, given to thee  
 For him to achieve, which shall in thy great deeds  
 His sovereign goodness make shine forth to men  
 No errand shall it be craves strength of thew  
 And muscle, but the virtues of the soul  
 Strength thee! such as to nerve their power withal  
 Kings to be call'd his nurslings regal awe  
 And sway resistless humbly put to school  
 Which heroes arm in who his warriors are.  
 A panoply such as endeavour earns



# BOOK IV

High, spiritual, calm wisdom's shielding strength  
 To guide the lance of courage to its aim  
 When comes the brunt: such armour as the soul  
 Forges with strong ascetic discipline  
 In readiness to war down the cored evil  
 At earth's deep root. Wait then and exercise  
 Thy watchful spirit in hard circumstance  
 Bitterest experience be to thee a book  
 On the severe bench of an arduous life  
 Strife, effort, difficulty sit and learn."  
 So did she imp in me adventurous hope  
 That noblest of all mothers. So I fledg'd  
 Upon this eyrie, this cliff-station lash'd  
 With the white breakers, those wings to roam  
 Heaven. Such growing plumes patience matures  
 The better to soar up against the sun.  
 Years past: and still I hoped, for still to hope  
 Was virtue, patience, duty: Nor didst thou  
 Goddess sublime, discourage me, but gav'st  
 Fresh fire unto that great that noble dream  
 And though through all terrestrial turbulence  
 Thou hast still spurr'd me on to earthly feats  
 Through difficulty and through hardship fierce.  
 Yet hast thou given me still to understand  
 Some day, some crowning hour of my torn life,  
 That strains and suffers caught in this whirlpool  
 Borne thus along an eddy of wild deeds,  
 Blind, headlong with no vision'd scope beyond,  
 Dashed hourly on the rude rocks of mischance  
 With no uncertain voice hast thou me given  
 To hope release from all this frothing vain  
 And thou the bringer of it that great deed  
 Life's crown, that heavenly exploit. And is this  
 All then, thou bringest from the Life of Life,  
 Beneficence creative working boon?  
 Death and destruction? What? to slaughter still  
 This the high deed, the exploit most sublime  
 For which my whole life trains and tarries for  
 Not if I know my Father well and thine  
 Not if but slaying still be its own scope  
 Upon no murderous errand will I go.  
 'Then stay!' With utterance as when thunder breaks



## PERSEUS

Rattled upon his ear the stern reply  
 'Stay! and with dream and longing fitter task  
 For thee, build thou thy childish towers of dream  
 Dreamer, not doer. Oh but thou failest quite  
 The mighty hope I built in thee,—my dream  
 Of twenty years! To have so sweated, wrought  
 Upon the very ore and sovereign metal  
 Of my hope—iron so after my own heart  
 Hammered and forg'd that bright sparks flew out  
 Around me of a superhuman courage  
 Tried thee and temper'd to the cold blue gleam  
 To find thee brittle sword break in my hand  
 But think not that in thee the eternal aim  
 Shivers to fragments. Straight to the camp will I,  
 Of thy foemen, the Aiolid camp and there  
 Find without labour as it oft falls out  
 The thing we seek lies at our feet undreamed  
 Hid in some hulking warrior, my man  
 The champion that shall go on this dread quest  
 Sword of the Highest, wrought ready to my hand  
 While I toil'd vainly. Pelops, it may be  
 Or else Bellerophon. From Sipylos  
 The golden, and Maeander's golden sands  
 Tiryns old, perhaps though down through Tantalus  
 He shiver from sovereign ardour—he at least  
 Already unto great adventurous peril  
 Hath put, the test his burning hardihood  
 Bestrid the sea from Asia and won  
 In Elis kingship and a peerless bride.  
 He stood not upon scruple cowardly  
 Hesitating his glorious hope, but rushed  
 At once in full faith blindly on his deed  
 Hurl'd from the chariot traitrous Myrtilus  
 He would not trust the traitor, when he had  
 His treason's use, the drawn thirl-pin should snap  
 Oenamaus' axle,—murder even he risk'd  
 Plot treachery first, then plain crime, anything  
 The escaping instant ask'd and his great dream  
 Through victory to win the peace thou dream'st  
 Peace of that ruffled ocean—Pelops isles  
 So named already in his striding thought  
 Which he shall surely compass from thee pluck



## BOOK IV

Who stick'st with scruple in the rear of deeds  
 Dreamer! laggard! the empire of thy sires  
 He or Bellerophon who in proud bloom  
 Of his disdainful youth refused a queen  
 He lagg'd not either in his standard's rear  
 That lofty banner set before his thought  
 Virtue's reality, the pride to feel  
 And to be stainless! With a loyalty  
 So greatly dumb, he rather would seem rebel  
 Unto his king, his yet unknowing king  
 Nay to his honour's hurt he would not peach  
 On Sthenoboea his temptress and queen  
 Renounced rather the place his virtue won  
 Nearest to greatness and Tirynthean rule.  
 Shook home and Corinth from his sole like dust  
 In indignation of a secret blush  
 To think and burn though none should know it, he  
 Murdered his reputation to be mixed  
 With what he scorns most all these cankered drags  
 Of envy and revolting discontent  
 Who would burn down an empire but to rake  
 For plunder in the ashes of its ruin.  
 From one such towering spirit I may hope  
 Instant acceptance of a darker thing  
 More dreadful. Stay thou then: in Olpae mope  
 Too dainty for the rough world's ruthlessness  
 Dream with thy mother translunary deeds.  
 As in deep scorn she spoke and turned from him  
 Sovereign contempt upon her lips severe  
 Yet sweet austerity. Away she swept  
 And heavenward in a trice away had rush'd;  
 So seemed it to his dazed perplexity:  
 Had he not stayed her, and while wonderingly  
 He bit for wrath his lip, for sorrowing wrath  
 At the felt glory of those beauteous wings  
 His soul's worth inly felt that he could not  
 Shake free to her sight and that she should scorn  
 Misread and misinterpret. Yet he stood  
 Boldly in his own right against the world:  
 To have his own, he pleaded resolute:  
 'Thou shalt not go hence, heavenly patroness  
 Thou know'st me better than to leave me so



## PERSEUS

Shamed and tongue-branded and by thee—with stain  
 Of that word coward festering in my ear  
 For to my soul nothing so base can reach!  
 Leave me in lurch of my majestic hope  
 I will not let thee. Nor shalt thou  
 The emprise illustrious thy bright face speaks  
 So eloquently splendid, howsoe'er  
 Thou tongue it wilfully in doubtful terms  
 Darkly—that shining errand which thou said'st  
 Thou from my father broughtest to my ear  
 Expressly mine, no, that thou shalt not give  
 To Pelops or another. Mine it is.  
 Why dost thou tantalisingly withhold  
 Yet dangle it before me. Have I not said  
 Steel me to it? Why so I say again:  
 But if perversely thou would'st have me think  
 That it but smells of blood, some cruelty  
 Of war or vengeance, justifies to man  
 Blood that I hate, nay Goddess do but think  
 How my hand reeks with parricidal stain  
 Foredoomed, thyself hast said it. And this would  
 One dark thread, one alone, obscure, thou saidst  
 (I catch at it) my else bright destiny—  
 Death of my grandsire, wrought by these blind hands  
 If that be it, then this cannot be dark  
 Darest thou swear it still? Is it all blood?  
 I'll not believe it, if from my great Sire  
 And thine, it come, if mine the good quest be  
 What, turn'st thou from me? O if thou go hence  
 To rob me in my father's high esteem  
 Then by sulphurous bolt I swear, whose course  
 I follow.—But no, no: It cannot be  
 Thou wilt not. Beard his wrath? Impossible  
 As for thy taunt 'twas nothing but a taunt.  
 Or dost thou in good sooth threaten to swerve  
 This glory that in me achievement seeks  
 My own great deed to others? It skills not  
 I reckon not of thy threat: Soon shalt thou see  
 What now seems great, insolence flaunting big  
 For lack of punishment, those thy tongue gilds,  
 Those captains of thy gull'd admiring vaunt,  
 Catiff from Tiryns fled, or upstart come



# BOOK IV

From Asia, who thinks to ruffian out  
 His murders in rebellion's hopeful field  
 Thyself shalt see them quenched in their defeat  
 Fled, slain, or vanquished in tomorrow's fight.  
 Such conquering courage in my soul I feel  
 Zeus in the highest, and my good cause inspire  
 It sticks me not at heart, thy taunt severe  
 But 'twas this other stung me to the quick  
 That thou should'st scorn my mother's holy ride  
 The sainted truth of Danaë, which she  
 From the bosom of Sapience received.  
 Wisdom supreme whence thou, too, flashing cam'st  
 That heavenly doctrine I was nursed upon  
 Until, long brooded on, it hath become  
 One with my being, my strong thought's blood and bone.  
 Dream, saidst thou? What! A translunary thing  
 Moonshine? Naught else? Mere owl-like moping blinks  
 At daylight, dainty of the bright sun's truth  
 That glorious inspiration I received?  
 Why, it outdazzles dull'd reality,  
 And darkness with its light, truth, solidest fact  
 To individual wisdom may accrue  
 Earth-born experience. Of the soul it is  
 Which being to its pure high beam akin  
 That heaven-drunk knowledge, taken it in like food,  
 Gloriously transubstantiates, lives on it,  
 Makes it the bright incalculable rule  
 To square life by, experience' compass, guide.  
 O do but hear me out! And thou shalt know  
 Wherefore I sprang not to a mighty deed  
 And thou the giver of it, why it is  
 I am thus vow'd against what cruel gleams  
 Out of it, pitiless, nor thou deniest,  
 That though great justice' self lie at the core  
 And mercy not be mingled, though Earth, Heaven  
 And all gods spur me to it, I cannot go.  
 She turn'd, joy under virginal eyelids  
 Severe above the pale checks' pure descent,  
 But to him rudely and reluctant turned:  
 'Say on, wonder of wisdom, who but now  
 Spak'st as in doubt of God's own burning gold  
 Showered in thee, though to title thee thrice o'er



# PERSEUS

Son of the Highest, thou hadst the acclaim of men  
 My word, and Danaë's. O weak in faith  
 A moment her to doubt! And to doubt me!  
 Ingrate, thou hadst in my wise, loving care  
 Mother and nurse to thy best thoughts and deeds.  
 What could she teach other than I, too, taught,  
 Or of high action, glorious enterprise  
 Foreshow which thou by strength of soul shouldst earn  
 On the severe bench of an arduous life  
 Strife, effort, difficulty? The exploit  
 She augur'd and thou since with longing wait'st  
 Ruthless it is, but what is that to thee?  
 Whom I have seen mow down thy foes like grass  
 That mighty, ruthless, fierce, tremendous deed  
 I from thy father bring, yet thou demurr'st  
 What is it that a mortal maid might learn  
 Bosomed a moment in the eternal bliss  
 Which I in the long ages school'd, who dwell  
 Always with wisdom, knew not already, to flaw  
 For thee the glorious offer. Strange indeed  
 In the deep intimacies of the Highest,  
 The intimacies of Wisdom infinite  
 Must that be! which his hushed profundity  
 Ever self-consell'd in that fervent hour  
 Brimm'd over to a perishable ear  
 Dreadful the secret blurted out to her  
 Which can thy aweless and undaunted mould  
 Shudder and from a deed thou hung'rest for?  
 So Pallas; and that prince, glad to get ear  
 The audience ask'd of his hard patroness  
 In eager hope with all that burned in him  
 Now to convince her, and from her the exploit  
 She had as yet but darkly in reverse  
 Shown, as it were symbol'd to his concert  
 That now to have, true minting warranted  
 Stamped with the image of his Father's face  
 More heavenly mild, more after his own thought  
 Thus spake: 'Ah, what is it, Goddess, sea, sky  
 Or earth holds or the deep dark underworld  
 Times past or present or things soon to be  
 (For the far future, Zeus alone sees that)  
 Which thou not know'st. And yet may not perhaps



# BOOK IV

Infinite goodness in its vast down-stretch  
 To our terrestrial, hide from heavenly eyes  
 Hung starlike o'er the seethe of our distress  
 Some reaches of the everlasting way  
 Glimpsed to mortality. From thee, too, hid  
 Athene, and all other powers save one  
 Nearest though thou unto the Father sit  
 And of his wisdom deepest though thou drink  
 At the blest banquet, where, as thou hast oft  
 Limned to my dream in listening wonder tranced  
 To hear thee speak of heaven and heavenly things  
 'Twixt the high throne and Phoebus and the Nine  
 Thou at his right hand sittest leaned to hear  
 Sage discourse, as the others too sit rapt  
 When like soft thunder he begins to speak  
 Upon what touches their high toils on earth  
 That thou, to kings his nurslings may'st impart  
 Glean'd from his lips of sovereign kingcraft  
 And government, wisdom that rules the world's  
 Deep motion, dost, to lose no precious word  
 Of his discourse enchair thee nearest him  
 Close at his footstool sitting as befits  
 The prudence of all-puissant foresight armed  
 The impetuous foot and act embodying leap  
 Of his great will. And I have heard thee say  
 Oft in oblivion of ambrosia  
 Strong nurse of gods, and nectar heaven's blithe drink  
 Thou art led rather with his infinite thoughts  
 To nourish, and the strains of Phoebus' lyre  
 The sapient wells of being, in high song  
 Thy soul's thirst and that hunger of thy mind  
 Speech, wise discourse bent to find sustenance  
 That, did not his own voice sonorous speak  
 After blithe Hebe's pleading—"Eat my child,  
 Famish not thy strong immortality  
 Narcissuslike over the beauty droop'd  
 Of thy divine deep thinkings": Thou would'st grow  
 Thou hast said more spare-cheek'd than thou art  
 Such heavenly food to thee, such drink it is  
 But to hear sing, but to see dance, the Nine  
 The blissful Nine, without whom heaven were harsh  
 Even to the Father's self-sufficing mind



## PERSEUS

His deep wantless joy if he should miss  
 Their voices, wells of song and poesy  
 The dearest of all lips that call him Sire  
 Save thou and bright Apollo. There are powers,  
 Hast thou not told me, after their own sort  
 Sage in the Father's wisdom, otherwise  
 Than thou art? Yet of one thou hast not told  
 When I have questioned thee, but oft as asked  
 Thou hast turned from me, a disdainful blush  
 Suffusing thy pure marble maidenhood  
 And thy lip pressing hast rebuk'd me, saying,  
 "Of him the less thou know'st the better for thee  
 Perseus: beware lest thou by covert look  
 Or thought gaze after his bright wings of gold  
 Enmesh thee in the net calamitous  
 Of his capturing snare, a maiden's cheek  
 Grain'd crimson, or his burning shaft receive  
 The bashful arrow of a maiden's eye.  
 For these have mightiest captains, heroes left  
 Nay, kings, high deeds of glory. For than these  
 Nothing so creeps on the fool'd heart like fire  
 To melt and soften virtue's hardest steel:  
 Of him quite other and clean contrary  
 Goddess to this thy saying have I heard told  
 From my own mother's lip. What shall I say?  
 Or how expound the wisdom mystical  
 Yet soul-convincing whereof he is sage  
 Love, mighty Eros. Vant-courier is he  
 Of the eternal purpose. He it is  
 Inflames the Father's self to such descent  
 Of the infinite pity, passion infinite  
 As rained me into being, moves to that stoop  
 World-rending, which to make meet earth and heaven  
 Highest with lowest, contact how sublime  
 On mortal pain and weakness pityingly  
 Prints, on a maiden's cheek, the infinite kiss  
 And splits the heart of Herē. For so priests,  
 In Argos tell and priestesses, who keep  
 The living wisdom learnt from Inachus  
 In that most ancient temple upon earth  
 Built, so 'tis said, on site of Herē's bower  
 Where Rhea, while the Titan war still raged



# BOOK IV

The divine freshness of her daughter hid.  
 Not as we deem with himself satisfied  
 But in divine dissatisfaction vast  
 As himself, whom not Herë's mighty arms  
 Can hold confined, nor the blest powers nor heaven  
 Since space he finds too little, infinite space  
 For his huge labouring beneficence  
 To ease its love on, for this cause it is  
 He, aching in the lone creative bliss  
 Till the wide universe, creation, too  
 His joy participate down to the worm  
 The littlest fragment of capacity,  
 To share his power, in life, joy, beauty breath'd  
 Perfection that large bliss toward which his will  
 Invisibly each hour in secret moves,  
 For this or loftier reason the most High  
 Stoops of our ignorance to learn, be school'd  
 In human suffering, through our griefs grow wise  
 Our fretted misery of pain and limit  
 Though for a moment, and, sage Love it is  
 Initiates him. This, Pallas is the lore  
 A mortal maid, (ah! scorn not our poor clay)  
 Glean'd in the rain of glory: in a flash  
 Through our dark history, night of Inachus  
 Its annals of hate, blood, and tears, beheld  
 The beacon star that guides it, disappears  
 But to emerge bright through the blinding sprays  
 Our race from error re-illuminating  
 And me, too, Goddess, to refuse a deed  
 Of cruelty. Shall I speak on, repeat  
 In her own words my mother's bodement to me  
 Touching this very exploit, or wilt thou  
 Still harsh, inexorably spur me, saying  
 "This is the deed, go do it, undefined  
 No least hint given of its bent or scope  
 Thy nameless dark, illustrious, fell deed."'  
 'Better it were,' she answered, 'in blind faith  
 In a rash glorious trust, no least hint given  
 To go about it, this illustrious deed,  
 Content but with my word, and thy Sire's hest.  
 Where is it then, the faith serenely sweet  
 Simplicity of mighty-hearted trust



## PERSEUS

Childlike implicit, never questioning  
 The why or wherefore, the frank, loyal, faith  
 Thou hitherto hast constantly repos'd  
 In Pallas. But thou art to my stern book  
 Rebel, it seems, and hast, weak renegade,  
 From me who fire with lust of splendid deeds  
 To Love gone over and his shallow school.  
 Never wouldst thou else dream my virgin ear  
 With his name to affront ; or to put faith  
 In women, their slight wisdom spun of dreams  
 Fancies, desires, weak moonshine. But speak on.  
 She ceased, his word awaiting : and the prince,  
 'Thou wilt not yet persuade me for all that.'  
 He said, frowning, 'to let go my strong grip  
 Of my benign-deem'd exploit, yielding thee  
 And harshness victor. From the bride of heaven  
 I had it, thy own scholar, Goddess dear,  
 Of thy bosom and counsel. In her words  
 Hear it, the blissful lore, she taught, that head  
 Haloing since with the pure rain of power  
 Immaculate, my mother whom I love  
 Best in the world. "Child, child," she said, "it rent  
 The brazen roof of my cloud-piercing tower  
 It stream'd on me the glory of the Highest  
 I felt him, who is life, power, freedom, joy,  
 Through the roof glittering, through each bolt and bar  
 Down-streaming in a rain of golden ruth  
 Drenching with pity all my lonely pain  
 Make thou no question but he is thy Sire,  
 Zeus in the highest, who the world's strife controls  
 And steers existence to a fore-seen haven.  
 Know it from the high annals of our line.  
 When the dream'd beauty of the world's far bliss  
 Impassions the Olympian to help string  
 Love's golden bow, and send Love's heavenliest shaft  
 A dream, a fire, a glory through the hearts  
 Of heroines, hath it not on our race  
 Mainly descended, and not once or twice  
 That rain-shower of the gold immortal dream  
 To make rebranch with more than mortal sap  
 With heavenly vigour grafted our great race.  
 Thou smil'st incredulous, who hast not felt



# BOOK IV

Too stern, crudely disdainful, Love's sharp plough  
 Whose share turns up to passionate noble things  
 The spiritual fallow of man's listless thought ;  
 Be not froward but lesson'd by what pealed  
 In that soul silence wisdom without word  
 When round me *He* came glorying, who since makes  
 My life a golden dream in which I live.  
 'Tis to keep down stagnation, that cold drag  
 Upon his mighty purposes that he  
 To stem the Gorgon pallor of despair  
 Which frosts the world, her mighty opposite  
 Yokes to his furrow, wingèd Eros warm  
 As she is cold, his son, celestial Love  
 The fire of souls, arm'd with celestial shafts  
 Glorying earthward. Love it is flames down  
 However without cause chaste Herë grieve  
 Some fragment of his passion and world-power  
 To breathe in the dull'd, wearying march of man,  
 This history-fretted pace. For that he shoots  
 The divine flash and outbreak of his will  
 In symbol-shapes of beauty and of strength  
 Mysterious and awful some fair maid,  
 To overshadow with his infinite power  
 Which toward all things yearns with infinite love.  
 Some heroine high-sorrowed, who shall bear  
 In her side, that toss'd vessel, mankind's hope  
 Heroes, the inspiration of his will  
 His seed of power. Love, Love their guiding-star  
 Beckons them on bright through their tears. O'er waves  
 Of grief and passion, foaming the world's fate  
 He leads them borne upon the storied woe  
 Through all the maze of her stung wanderings  
 Did he not guide our first great ancestress  
 Fair Io, for this cause? for this did close  
 Bar to the heavenly world-love that hastes  
 To fold the orb, that star-outnumbering watch  
 Eye-myrriad Argos, sentry of heaven's queen  
 Who slain, why leap'd she to the gad-fly's sting?  
 Only for this that she by such far roam  
 Might kindle to God's sunrise, dusking man  
 Here forest-gloom'd in continental night  
 Long after when her glorious progeny



## PERSEUS

Should wester back, school'd upon Nile's sage banks  
 Then; that His morn might bud, before it bloom'd,  
 Soon ere that mighty westering while they,  
 Our sires, sojourn'd in Egypt yet, as to haste on  
 The never slumbering passion of his thought  
 Fore-run preparatory, with burning torch  
 Snatch'd from the east, his bridal pomp that comes  
 In the sun's wake. Who was it guided then  
 To Ida, to the very founts of Power  
 Led over waves to such large motherhood  
 To burgeon empire, name a continent,  
 Europa. Love's the gad-fly goaded blood  
 That roams in our tormented restless veins  
 To spurn flowers and tame shores worked in her, too,  
 The kinswoman of Danaüs, our high kin  
 Daughter of Phoenix, Belus' grand-daughter  
 Her as to weave sails for our westering  
 Love from the flowery Phoenician mead  
 Glamour of gold wings lured to the sea-beach  
 And still'd her dread, when, fearing, her bright hair  
 Flung tossing to the sea breeze, while her hands  
 Grasp'd the strong horns that symbol'd sovereign power,  
 She rode the roughening seas, to bear in Crete  
 Minos and Rhadamanthys. In her wake  
 Cadmus, her brother, drew she, anguish'd sore  
 In that search after her, not vain perhaps  
 Though with Harmonia, Ares' divine child  
 He wander, a bright snake the Illyrian glens  
 His long-lost sister Europa shall he find  
 No vain search 'twas to have sow'd the dragon's teeth  
 And seed of letters and Cadmeian Thebes.  
 And the same generation wondrous time,  
 The germinating of mighty realms, when fate  
 Had all matured the instant and the man  
 Ripening in the high thought world-perfecting,  
 When from her Orient stall should home again  
 The weary pace that sowed our spacious rule  
 Love, mighty Eros but with Anteros  
 To aid him, for that Egypt's dreaming palms  
 And murmuring Memphis held AEgyptus' sons  
 Not to rethread their glorious ancestress  
 The track of Io ripened for return,



## BOOK IV

Love the rash fifty fired for cousin bloom.  
 See, O my son, how sovereign wisdom swerves  
 Even the heart's hurricane, lust, terror, hate  
 To his boon uses, his majestic ends  
 Which not all Hell into man's spirit breathed  
 From Erebus can hinder. Fugitive  
 From the detested warmth of blood too near  
 The storm he rais'd Loathing Love's twin brother  
 Summon'd for help from Heaven, 'twas Love swooped down  
 To warn those unapprised, those feminine  
 Fair rowers, at rest upon the resting oar,  
 While their eyes took sad lingering farewell  
 Of green delightful Egypt. 'Haste', he said,  
 And each pulsation of his golden wings  
 Was like a breeze to haste them, whispering  
 A love to each, a lad of handsome looks  
 Far over the wild foam: 'Why tarry ye  
 Maidens? O haste to obliterate with waves  
 Your beauty on this ocean-blinding track.  
 Cut, cut your moorings straight! Lo, in the haze  
 Of stirless palms, AEgyptus' hastening spears,  
 The dust-cloud of your cousins' hot pursuit.  
 Day burns up to halloo the unholy chase  
 Dawn in their wake up-rushes, and the east  
 The homeless east inhospitably bright  
 Is all one torch to eye their fury on.  
 Why sit ye like a row of sunning doves  
 Till darkening from the landward eagle Lust  
 Swoop and the shaking of one stormy blast  
 Dispetal all your flower-proud maidenhood.  
 O haste, and make your fifty oar-blades wings  
 For in the west, not here where leans the palm  
 And dreams the lotus, but where gnarl'd and stern  
 Bow'd Argive oaks shadow the glide divine  
 Of Inachus, your rude sires' ancient home,  
 There maidens shall you meet, oar'd hence, your fate,  
 Row one frown, row one passion of disdain  
 To fly from these who sully their high race,  
 Fail from their blood, and break the ancestral mould  
 There waits the radiant lover of your dream  
 In Argos, Herë's bower, who knows to match  
 And pair hearts, each her perfect peer shall find



# PERSEUS

To mate her young soul's yearning purity  
 Cousin the very cast of her desire.  
 Outrealise her fancy's burning scorn  
 With beauty rude from out the world's fresh prime  
 Blush-misted cheeks of bashful modesty  
 To make you loathe the bitterer your bad cousins  
 Hearts such as I light up with altar-flame  
 Of humble worship, incense breathing up  
 So pure they are like chaste pyres to consume  
 All smokier passion but lend burning life  
 To a whole-hearted rarely single flame  
 Soar Phoenix-like from those burnt ashes of self  
 Married in aspiration and troth-plight  
 To you already ; Love that brightens more  
 With difficulty blown to strong blaze  
 Tear-cleans'd and winnowed with a thousand sighs.  
 So whispering through their midst, to each her joy,  
 Went up and down that dove of ocean's deck  
 Whose lifted pinnions stood outspread for flight  
 Love, the eternal spur of noble deeds  
 With burning wings of glory fanned he them  
 To that compulsion of foam-churning oars  
 And spray'd thwarts that should send bounding o'er waves  
 As wild and free their tragic destinies  
 Forty and nine who all too masculine  
 Or else in dull obedience weakly blind  
 Had served through bloodshed and their father's hest  
 The everlasting purpose. They had well-nigh  
 Stopped the great-historied stream of Inachus  
 Yea, fifty lifted daggers ; to which Night  
 Black machination's nurse and Sleep and Death  
 Her furtive sons gave boldness and gave edge  
 Fifty fair arms hate nerved and filial faith  
 Would at a blow have ended our long line  
 In one wide bath of bridegroom massacre  
 Had not the last and loveliest Love unnerved  
 And those large drops that down the soft cheek coursed  
 Of pitying Hypermestra.—O by her  
 Be thou exempl'd, her brave shining deed  
 And know, my son, 'tis love, not hate rules all  
 Hate-conquering power and might magnanimous  
 Zeus first, Zeus last, Zeus midst and without end :



## BOOK IV

His sovereign sceptred-Mercy, who in ruth  
 For the oppress'd and Titan-trampled orb  
 This suffering littleness that Kronos sluiced  
 From the all swallowing vastness old, to salve  
 And medicine the red act that budded Time  
 Zeus, father of existence spann'd this arch  
 Shrunk frame of his ethereal grandsire  
 On Atlantean shoulders and for balm  
 To heavenly anguish to fill up huge rift  
 That rankling hollow betwixt Earth and Heaven  
 Creation his eternal work began  
 Beauty his work beneath, grandeur above  
 His starry scheme, harmonious world-plan  
 For that did he contract the sister knot  
 With blissful Herë, marriage sacrosanct  
 To be the mother of men as he the Sire  
 Nor of men only but whatever walks  
 Or swims or flies or leaps to holy life  
 Beneath the sun, in all things to ensoul  
 Some measure of his vast creative joy  
 Some pulse of music, peace, perfection flower  
 Thus is it that with Herë comforting  
 His might with that loved littleness Zeus  
 Bows the wide starry soul of Uranus  
 Toward the bosom of his cruel spouse  
 With that benignant spectacle, toward Earth.  
 And task yet harder Earth in the cased strife  
 Of creatures, Heaven's blood shed upon her breast  
 Poured on her bosom fierce, reluctant nurse  
 Harsh stepmother of all that suffering life,  
 Earth by the touch of pity reconciled  
 Nearer He lifts towards the stoop of Heaven.  
 All this the world's dim primal story old  
 Have I not goddess glean'd from thee in part  
 Before already and when thou spak'st even now  
 'Tis thy great word my mother doth confirm  
 From the bosom of glory. "To make rungs  
 For this ladder", she said, "humanity  
 Frail staircase of the infinite ascent  
 Link'd intermediate between God and worm  
 Join its two sunder'd ineffectual poles  
 Fierce man, frail woman, bridge the upward yearn



## PERSEUS

And virtue of our tristful race, that toils  
 And weeps toward heaven, for this cause, Perseus 'tis  
 Zeus in his mystery of wisdom deep  
 Sole and apart from Herē led by him  
 Blind wondering reluctant with sore pain  
 Wrung in these mighty steps to acquiesce  
 These steps to join brute Earth ethereal Heaven  
 From age to age 'tis he fashions and shapes  
 From random timber ready to his hand  
 His woman-born and power-begotten race  
 Of heroes. From no seen virtue in me  
 Beauty, aught else, canst thou call him thy sire  
 Since not as mortal women with vague yearn  
 Nature's dim goad, blind Aphrodite's spur  
 In rash and random passion blunderingly  
 Conceived and nourish'd and brought forth wast thou  
 Sired by the infinite Purpose and shaped:  
 But as a wise artificer may breathe  
 In stone, clay, wax, shaped, ponder'd lovingly  
 His soul's image, so by creative mind  
 In the brief perishable clay of me  
 Wast thou breath'd, Perseus, fashion'd as he was  
 Pelagus our forefather the first man  
 Whom in the dim primaeval woods they met  
 The wise Creator and his all too rash  
 First workman, overhasty to foresee  
 The vext far reaches of eternal mind  
 First to come over from the Titan kin,  
 Prometheus, afterward so grandly erring  
 Fiercely beneficent, a Titan's fault,  
 For man's sake. Shambling footed they him found  
 Still brute-like toward earth stooping for food  
 With the strong heavenward lift in him divined.  
 In sleep they cast him, to let loose within  
 Dreams, the dim soul of all that work'd within  
 Hovering imaginations of the being  
 He yet should be. Then took they from his breast  
 Those fair dreams, the bold formless, struggling shapes  
 Of unborn aspiration. Upon them  
 Zeus breathed and to his strong creative breath  
 The flame and passion of the world's desire  
 After his thought, Prometheus modelled clear;



# BOOK IV

Feature by feature shaped and limb by limb  
 Moulded close after the divine idea  
 His spirit; which, dim growth conceived anew  
 They put back in his bosom, closed the rift  
 But the last nether rib put they not back  
 On his left side but left out for a sign  
 Of separation from his first brute self.  
 In such like awful wise wast thou, too, made.  
 For in the rattling gold that round me pour'd  
 The overflow and passion of this power  
 Methought the almighty finger stretch'd and took  
 Thee, Perseus, gather'd thy soul's faculties  
 Together as it were, spiritual gold  
 No rude ore of the everlasting thought  
 Since imperfection toils the hand of God  
 Roughly and for the first time with alloy  
 Dug from the steep-down veining lodes of dream  
 That make up that rich mine, his wisdom vast  
 His mighty dream, perfection, but many times  
 By action in the melting pot of change  
 Tried, in the fires of life, his crucible  
 Through generations many, that rebirth  
 And gated issue from the glades of dream  
 Herë's deep vale, hung with as golden fruit  
 The beckon of all virtue; many times  
 By thee beheld, whence thou hast brightness drunk  
 A spirit, training in prenatal bliss.  
 Which to revisit, gold burning toward gold  
 In kindred aspiration, thou shalt go  
 For the release of all those captain spirits  
 Pent there and practising their future deeds  
 In the heroic glade, kings, prophets, bards  
 Saints, patriots, martyrs, history's hands and feet  
 All mighty ardours travailing in joy  
 Whom thou shalt rouse and to each generous soul  
 Heroic ardent like a trumpet thrill  
 To burst the sleep of unsuspecting bliss  
 And wing them to the dear distracted land  
 Yet, as the holy vision flash'd on me,  
 No spirit but in the flesh it shall be thine  
 To view the blissful vale, Futurity.  
 Thence wast thou brought by the almighty hand,



## PERSEUS

Seeded from thy past acts seeking in me  
Plantation, to swell forth and burst afresh  
To birth. And as to Herë her gold fruit  
The keys of birth and being precious are  
Perfect desirable, so wert thou grown  
In the glad vision to my longing eye  
When the almighty hand thee, Perseus, took  
Stretch'd forth and through my bosom's fleshly screen  
Placed thee within. I felt thee at my heart  
Thou blissful burthen, like a drop distil.  
My whole soul was one rapture and hath been  
Since of illumination high and strange  
Knowledge ineffable that round me rains  
Strange glory to be taught the mystic way  
Toward perfection, whither the wide world  
Tends by degrees; I a main part of it.  
From that moment was gone the lonely ache  
Of my brass-tasting bitter prison. Each flower  
Looked down upon from my casement a friend  
Was, a familiar face: Every grass-blade  
And leaf flung recognition and mute smiles  
Of hope, encouragement, companionship  
Wayfarers brotherly bound with me all  
To one same distance whereso'er I look'd.  
Wherever fate should lead me, the great sky  
Doming infinity's round upward arch  
Opened with its blue walls in endless doors  
Of beauty upon beauty to my dream  
While ocean spread her sapphire dancing floor  
But for my heart to pulse in unison  
To ripple and to laugh with its gay sparkle  
Those footing dancers of the Nereids' choir  
Foam, heave and fall to laughter musical.  
No longer to the beating wings of hope  
Was my captivity a maze, a puzzle  
Like that blue spider-web, Arachne's hills  
Seen from my tower, a cross-work intricate  
Of threads bewildering where I hung trapped  
Film'd by some demon fate. Earth, sea and sky  
With the blue mountains' beckoning mystery  
The world, in architecture but for me  
Met vastly visible from my sky prison



# BOOK IV

To inn the journeying rapture that was I  
 Temple the hush and solemn hope of me.  
 Was I not heroine to the world's dream  
 One of those mighty mothers of mankind  
 Whose birth-throes should be as the blossoming  
 Of nations. Tarry then as I have said  
 Look forth not idly, but in practice school'd  
 Of all great things which in thy nature bud  
 With certain expectation that from thee  
 Shall bloom this mighty deed whence springs the world  
 Futurity awaiting thy strong hand  
 To make sprout every puissant seed of good  
 To thee 'tis fated; for it thou was born  
 Yet scan it well when from the Father brought  
 By Hermes or Athene or what god  
 Soever. See that heavenly jealousy  
 Not reave it from thee then this splendid quest  
 Bringing a meaner exploit in its place  
 To blind thee and mislead thee. Thou shalt know  
 By one sure token, if the quest be thine  
 West it shall beckon thee, as I have said  
 Mute finger, sign-post of the sovereign will  
 Even as it did thy fathers for great ends  
 To Argolis, for mightier it shall thee  
 The end for which they westered carry on  
 Right into those vast vales Hesperian  
 Great Herë's solemn garden whispering slopes  
 Whose flowers are souls. For there Life's fruit gold hung  
 Fragrance adorable, the bloom, the sting,  
 The rally, aspiration, joy of things  
 Spring feels it, the grass, flowers the earth bound dead  
 But most upon man's spirit burns that gleam  
 Upon the nations luring influence  
 Felt from the awful gold of Herë's tree  
 World-mothering whence shining a far peace  
 Seen o'er the bloody surge of history  
 It stings through woes, through sufferings though-fired man."  
 I know thee mighty Goddess! thou wouldst rouse  
 Sternly my blood, my ardour, trumpet shrill  
 With what thou heard'st of thunderous peal'd to thee:  
 But the bland after-tempest harmony  
 The diapason of all Nature's life



# PERSEUS

Behind the crash, that in his voice is heard,  
 Glad,\* tearful the refresh'd wide joy of things  
 Rising in crushed, wet happy thanks to him  
 For rain, his shower'd strength, his abundant heaven  
 Pour'd down in that cool blissful drench of power  
 That part of his divine message thou would'st  
 Conceal, the heavenlier music. Fool me not  
 To think it is all slaughter he requires.  
 Would'st thou persuade me so daughter of Zeus  
 Thou who till now wast all of him to me  
 His goodness world-unwearied. If thou dost  
 I will gainsay thee oracled to speak  
 With filial insight in my bosom shrined  
 Far ortherwise I feel him in my soul  
 Dearer than life, nearer than thought to me  
 My Father! Summ'd perfection in my mind  
 So total'd that it yields the very square  
 And answer to this vex'd arithmetic  
 Nature's still added, multiplying ill,  
 Rending and rent in fierce division still.  
 Behold it whole, satisfying, complete  
 Even in the world without us, in his work  
 The work of his hands, most eloquent to speak  
 Its Maker, crown of things, this blue arch  
 The bending yearn of his vast tenderness  
 Down to us stooping, as it were his gaze  
 Saddening and softening down to our vext puzzle  
 Star-strewn with infinite wisdom, or his strength  
 That clasps the world in rondure, his stretch'd arm  
 To lift earth nearer to eternal heaven.  
 Show me in my exploit that milder side  
 Dear to mortality gracious, sublime  
 Of his omnipotence, then not till then  
 Empower me to what awful thing thou wilt  
 And tell me by what means, goddess, I must  
 Flame Westward in the purpose of the Highest  
 What there must I do of his august bland will.  
 So in a burning eloquence of truth  
 Soul-felt with passionate conviction spake  
 God's champion clutching his majestic thought  
 So full he brimm'd in that resplendent dream,  
 Herself had taught, astonished half to see



# BOOK IV

Her own strength imaged in him. Now she mused  
 Now will I break to him his very wish  
 But no! his stubborn spirit needs to rouse  
 The bit of opposition, weakly to give  
 Dull rein to him he tires in that pace  
 Tempers so thoroughbred and fierce may fret  
 For hindrance, for impediment to break  
 Their strength on; but the weir it is, not dyke  
 Must draw the fullness of this deep strong stream  
 The way I would, the way he channels out  
 So to herself; aloud and stern to him  
 'Have it then as thou wilt. Thou would'st fain build  
 The newer Argos, Tyrenes happier tower'd  
 But a new slate it needs, fresh virgin scope  
 Cheaply would'st thou and with a remedy  
 So easy, as light change of site and name  
 To root out inbred taint, disastrous deeds  
 Undying recrudescent in thy race  
 Stain not on stones but on the soul within  
 Which though it sleep in thee shall burst afresh  
 In thy descendants. New sweet sap must thou  
 Send coursing through the old heroic tree  
 To heal the rot, the canker of the race.  
 Have then thy wish. Wester like thy great sires  
 In the sun's track, far as the golden set  
 Past gambol of the mad bounds Io took  
 Outwestering quite thy ancestors and fetch  
 From the sundown where the blessed Aithiopes dwell  
 Foam wash'd and flawless by the setting sun  
 Thence Perseus 'tis thy lofty fate to fetch  
 A peerless bride in the designs of Zeus  
 Reserved for thee, that with a purer stem  
 Than any sadly leafing beneath suns  
 East of bow'd Atlas strain'd and suffering stoop  
 Thou may'st in thy posterity regraft  
 To fruit with happier augury. Why is it  
 Thou lookest blank and frown'st askance at me  
 At this, too, that I give, emprise so bland  
 So after thy own heart, no murderous thing  
 To make thee shudder and thy blood run cold.  
 Love, love, it shall be ancestral star  
 Thine as he shone for Hypermestra once



## PERSEUS

Bright that becks the beacon to thy line  
 Full of divinely pitying gush of ruth  
 Is this too, this most merciful high deed  
 Thou must rush to in rescue of the maid  
 Fate and thy single courage shall make thee do  
 Nursling of goddesses imperill'd there  
 By sunset's marge. But for that sterner deed  
 This ruthless exploit: meddle not with it  
 I warn thee it will burn thy heart like fire  
 For the defeated vast old mournful powers  
 Titanic foes in that world ending west  
 Must thou meet, and one fair, one pallid foe  
 Of perishable mould whom thou must slay  
 Lovely terrific and yet pitiable  
 Being but a pawn in their great mundane strife  
 World-hinging, push'd upon the board toward us  
 By the indignant black opposing powers  
 Upon a point of the long battle squares  
 Vital to victory; so that our host  
 King, queen, castle our radiant armies white  
 Hang breathless on the next perilous move  
 What knight of our side shall at his own risk  
 Sally relentless out, cut off that foe  
 Thou wast to do, was in thy horoscope.  
 The horror haunting pity of that stroke  
 Wilt thou with my mirroring shield to blind  
 Have the heart, Perseus, rear in thy steel'd breast  
 The courage cold to sever her fair neck  
 Hold it up dripping that wild mournful head.  
 Beautiful is she, Perseus, a sad face  
 Most like a woman's though divine her race  
 The touching pathos of a mortal thing—  
 But no! abandon it. I did not think  
 I should have had to halve this mighty deed  
 Whole splendidly majestically one  
 In shrunk dimensions meanly parcell'd out  
 To thee and to another. But the hour  
 Admits no dallying. 'Tis with the world  
 Or neck or nothing in a race of death  
 With us mere pitch and toss now whom to choose  
 A span, a hand's breadth of permitted sand  
 Remains to us in time's hour-glass unrun



## BOOK IV

Quick then be our decision. Unto thee  
 Mildness and mercy even as thy heart desires  
 The bland half of this deed—its ruthlessness  
 Entrusted unto another, some mere man  
 He, he, it is must enter the conceal'd  
 And cloudy birth glades. For with steadfast heart  
 By suffering and sorrow undeterred  
 He must unto those captain spirits hold up  
 My shield of foresight, and to them display  
 Theirs and the world's fate ; who when they shall read  
 Upon its face, a sea of troubled things  
 Dark, shivering in the storm of their great deeds  
 Sorrows, and darings, history on its face  
 Portended, they no other guide shall need  
 To path from the divine prenatal glen  
 Their unborn ignorance ; for the woeful teen  
 The bleeding of his scarr'd and glorious time  
 Seen on my shield, shall to each generous soul  
 Heroic, ardent, like a trumpet thrill  
 To burst the sleep of unsuspecting bliss  
 And wing them to the dear distracted land.  
 That Perseus, fragmentary bode dim perceived  
 Flash'd in the bright ecstasy of blinding gold  
 Her earth-flaw'd rapturous prophesy to thee  
 Wrongly as it falls out by her referr'd  
 Though in sublime contact with the plumbless mind  
 And sheer fate forging purpose : though with thee  
 Her flesh and blood felt stirring in her side  
 To prompt her leap at one bound to the truth  
 Fond, partial mother-bodement well might err  
 Seeing that I the wisdom of the Highest  
 A more than mother to you Inachids  
 In this thing err'd, from long since was misled  
 Myself too fond, too partial, to the gleams  
 Of heroism, worth, virtue in your race  
 To think from thence, a hero should arise.  
 Love was it, Danaë said, was it Love swooped down  
 To warn those unapprised those feminine  
 Fair flowers at rest, upon their resting oars ;  
 Never could gleam of Love's false gaudy wings  
 Lure to that sailing, or his hot breath blow  
 The wind of fate which whispering shook the shrouds



## PERSEUS

And breathed foam-freshened purpose in those chaste  
 Those maiden fifty, when at my command  
 Encouraged and the crashing peal of Zeus  
 The well-pull'd strokes of their adventurous oars  
 I standing at the prow, I pointing, drove  
 Old Egypt's arts to nighted Argolis,  
 "Steer onward helmsman, and ye, heroines,  
 High-fated shrink not from the foam with fear  
 What! would ye linger till their strong arms rend  
 Your tresses and with violence invade  
 With grasp too kin on cousin-loathing flesh  
 Shriek-undissuaded your pure chastity?"  
 I said, and with my great spear's glittering point  
 Touch'd the white arm of one who nearest me  
 Sat hesitating. Hypermestra bright,  
 The shining gate which, Perseus, thy fam'd sires  
 Let forth and thee! Most featured like to thee  
 Was she, thy great foremother: Youth in her  
 With firmness mingled: and her stature such  
 Though feminine, not all unlike to thine  
 Lissome and tall, a sun to many moons  
 Who of her face still borrowed countenance  
 And shone from her: the strength that afterwards  
 In teeth of her great father's murderous hest  
 Gush'd solitary pity, and alone  
 Was bold to spare. She heedless of the prick  
 That drew blood from her, at my strong command  
 Herself bestirr'd, and strongly disenthral'd  
 Her gaze from Egypt. To her sisters then  
 She cried: together to their oars they fell  
 And fifty bench'd in one stroke marrying  
 Determination smote the homeless sea  
 But I turn'd to that brooding helmsman old  
 Thy frail forefather, mighty Danaüs  
 Where he sat looking toward the mouths of Nile  
 And loth to face the foam engirdled waste  
 Anxious, prolific in as many fears  
 As all his fair but fenceless progeny  
 To their old sire I turned me, and to him  
 Thus courage spake: "What saddens thy great soul  
 Deep brooding scion of Argolic sires  
 That thou tak'st with a melancholy eye



## BOOK IV

The salt blue freedom of the freshening surge  
 And though thy hand looks west, with backward gaze  
 Thou wistfullyregardest fading shores  
 Tak'st farewell sad of Egypt's lessening palms.  
 May I conjecture of thee then this thing  
 That the brave simple faith of thy great sires  
 Which filled thee, which confiding utterly  
 In my strong power to save, in these hard beams  
 Hew'd out my hest and from that shapèd mast  
 Spread sails to counsel, now at point to part  
 Scared by the homeless sea ye huddle on  
 That faith so mighty, hath forsook thee quite  
 Or do I rather read thy listless eye  
 And doubting cheek to home disdainfully  
 Back to thy rude forefathers and the glide  
 Of Inachus. Hard thou considerest  
 This strange unnatural passion heaven inspired  
 In cousins for their all too sister kin  
 Which hath compelled thee to swift sea-faring :  
 Hard, hard I know to thee old man it is  
 Born here and nursed in Egypt's wisest lore  
 To leave those glorious temples pillared high  
 The Sphinx, and the eternal pyramids  
 Skyward protesting from the bones of kings  
 In that blue hope, the splendour, the throng'd dream  
 Wisdom's own home that mighty Memphis is  
 The sojourn, not the true abiding-place  
 Of Io's race, yet to relinquish these  
 For your barbaric homeland, difficult :  
 Harsh, hard! But the deep cause, O seed of Kings  
 Hearken, what fierce, imperious, strange need  
 Blows in this blast of passion heaven-inspired  
 Not one for one but fifty mad at once  
 For fifty, to make fly these timorous deers  
 Rude lust in storm behind them, and before  
 The roughening surge: the solemn reason deep  
 Hear, which so strongly in the world's behoof  
 Hurries in navigation fugitive  
 Thee, Danaüs and these papyrus-rolls  
 Strewn at thy feet the wisdom of the east  
 Arts, arms, inventions brave, a little seed  
 Wing-wafted in thy bird of ocean's beak—



## PERSEUS

Little, the seed, and few the labourers  
For the wide acre which thou hast to sow  
A continent; hear what grafts Egypt hence  
For Hellas in your oar-blades blossoming.  
It is that Zeus may lighten your long task  
Nay, the world's check rankling at earth's deep core  
The drowsy lure that lies beneath all lands  
Beneath all seas with million coiling gaze  
Ever in ambush to dart forth at power  
Which pauses her enervating archery  
She, she it is in your reluctant oars  
Would now, even now backwater and reverse  
This daring throw from earth's root she enroot.  
Surprised at its own beauty the young world  
To stoop and lean over the murmurous pool  
And gaze a cold Narcissus on the face  
Of its self-flattered, self-infatuated bloom  
Pine, wither, o'er its seen self, walk roaming  
The forest on, rapt, following the call  
Of that enchanting echo, spirit voice  
Invisible and bodiless luring  
The soul of the world's ardour, listening fired  
Self-fretted in a divine discontent  
Toward the bridal-purpose of the Highest  
Which, but for her, would soon embrace the orb  
But for that baneful gaze within the deeps  
Already, see, the sapient towers she saps  
Of Memphis and the wealth-contented walls  
Of Babylon. Why look thy sage eyes back  
To these or any of those mighty realms  
There in the East the dawn's fresh votaries  
Arrested at the bright awakening beam  
Majestic Memnons harping to the sun  
Already stone with all their obelisks,  
Sepulchral mountains of sky aiming bricks  
O'er mummied kings who wait their soul's return  
And palaces sphinx-wardered and engloomed  
Solemn, hymn-echoing temples. Hast thou mark'd  
How leaps that slender lady of the East  
The date-palm to the sun and to his eye  
How quickly she in fruitful marriage grows  
How hastes to load her breasts exuberant



## BOOK IV

With clusters of her children, the rich date  
 And the eye everlasting whose deep ken  
 Penetrates every rind and to the pith  
 Probes, all unflinching the stark worth of things  
 Fear for the world in this upshoot of man  
 So early ripe the brilliant East hath risen  
 Gracile and slender from too rich a loam  
 By his rude wind that strengthens, sufferings, tears  
 Afflictions rude too little rained and borne  
 This young awakening of nations here  
 That front his ray, the favourites of the sun  
 This bloom of sunrise fresh not lasting, rather  
 Delicate glory, such as softly mists  
 The fair complexion of this tender maid  
 Who toils the oar at Hypermestra's side  
 And casts back at the sea her paling glance  
 But durable as the robust red  
 That grains the cheek of thy first-born, as slow  
 To ripen to that settled hue mature  
 And like the strength of her unwearied arm  
 And like the stubborn spirit that my spear's prick  
 Recked not nor minded the red starting blood  
 She doth not stop betwixt the steady strokes  
 For aught look backward or aught else regard  
 Such the dour heart of rude Argolic oaks  
 Rugged Pelasgean. Grasp the tiller hard  
 And thitherward, old helmsman, bravely steer  
 For there, from this strong hearted maid, thy child  
 In the fifth generation shall be born  
 That hero, 'tis to find him the sovereign Power  
 So splits and peels the race of Inachid  
 With shock of sorrows fierce reiterate  
 Seeking impassioned, sternly amorous  
 Of your strong generations till he come  
 To the live core, that soul of pith and worth  
 The heft to his high purpose. He who shall not  
 Melt like thee in valediction fond  
 No nor look back to any languid palms  
 But as soon as heard with instantaneous feet  
 Leap to the mighty summons utterly.  
 Blindly believing and obeying drive  
 Yet further West this westering prow of yours



## PERSEUS

In him shall the tormented wandering  
 The sorrows of your race down-fretted find  
 Its meaning and fulfilling recompense  
 Its home of vast purpose in a sea of calm  
 When Egypt in his hands and Hellas borne  
 Nay continents, the round world, every land  
 Eye-caught in solemn glimpse in my fair shield  
 He shall with steeled courage dauntlessly  
 Hold up to those astonished spirits in bliss  
 The choice and flower of all lands, travailing  
 In Herë's glade, birth-paused futurity  
 The flashing inspiration of their fate  
 Each ardent soul released to the dear  
 The wished for grass and flowers, the very soil  
 Of its nativity heard whispering  
 Like swarms of bird-wings on the scent of spring  
 They thitherward shall issue to inhere  
 Each in the patriot passion of felt earth  
 And air breath'd nature till the focund womb  
 Receive them. Such empire shall he achieve  
 Heaven's aim by many ages hastening bravely  
 And History's pace swiften'd on its way  
 Thy bold descendant. For my mirroring shield  
 Rich with sorrows streaming with the wounds  
 Of all the unborn world, he shall uplift  
 Before that horror-curdling thing, her heart  
 Indurated past marble to make melt  
 And ease the mighty stroke that frees the world.  
 What is it Perseus? Thou wouldst interrupt  
 While that I spoke something I have perceived  
 To tongue itself for utterance bursts thee within  
 My bodement to thy ancestor of thee  
 Prophecy that on thy refusal breaks  
 Shattered in spin-drift fails unfulfilled  
 But of the bright espousal in the West  
 Is it of that thou burn'st to speak. Thou frown'st  
 It seems on this fair exploit. What would'st thou  
 Shame, shame, wilt thou that exploit too reject  
 Basely thy back turn on that rescueless  
 That peerless creature perfect past man's thought—  
 Nursling of goddesses, my scholar dear  
 For whose hand gods fiercest burn in heaven.



## BOOK IV

Wilt thou not rush to rescue that friendless maid  
 Abandoned to a fate most horrible,  
 Whom nothing but only thy strong hand can save  
 Thou that burn'st for deeds high pitiful.  
 Impetuosity as fierce as hers  
 Cut short her indignation, waived away  
 Her scarce-felt, sharp rebuke, pushing aside  
 As nothing to the point chiding, scorn, frown  
 He of all else disdainful but the goal  
 Suddenly glimpsed feat unimaginable  
 His human daring never could have hoped  
 Quest incredibly sublime burst forth:  
 'Goddess, my goddess! Ah! cease thou to speak  
 Of bridal and betrothal. What is it  
 Thou vainly humm'st of marriage in my ear  
 Marry me thou, troth-plight to whom thou wilt  
 But tell me is it she who slaughter demands  
 Whom thou in my wondering boyhood gavest me sight  
 That morn in windy Samos in childish game?  
 Is that the parley which in tremendous hunt  
 I have gone questing all the earth  
 The quarried ambush'd face upon whose sleuth  
 I have this way and that err'd all the while  
 A dull hound not to remember the dread scent.  
 It comes back on me. As with thy shield I played  
 Thy mystic shield of wisdom on whose face  
 Rife with the presented image of all things  
 That are or will be, figures perpetual  
 Coming and going orb'd existence, seethe,  
 I with that foam of vision like a boy  
 Played, laughing every moment to see come  
 Each mighty wonder hatched before its time  
 In glimpse abortive in the marvelling sun  
 The dumb show of futurity which I  
 Knew not momentous but at each new thing  
 Danced, and clapp'd ignorant hands at that puppet show  
 Smiling didst thou indulge me and with hands  
 Celestial held closer that orb-glassing pearl  
 As each sight swell'd and burst and foamed away  
 Till direful freezing my young heart with fear  
 Came that face in pallid loveliness  
 Petrifying the gazer. Fascinated



## PERSEUS

I stood, undaunted by the dreadful look  
 Ardently longing curious to see  
 The strange thing near touch, feel it. Suddenly  
 One tress it seemed of those blue gleaming coils  
 Awake and from amongst her virgin locks  
 Darted, serpentine lightning, venemous  
 To fix its fork'd tongue in my quailing flesh  
 Out of the shield it sprang so vividly  
 Like a live thing, I with a cry stept back  
 But thou still smiling did'st encourage me  
 With invitation of heart-stealing looks  
 To bear it out with unblench'd foot, approach  
 And front the luring terror. Then it was  
 That I beheld for the first time a form  
 Holding a crooked sword whose cruel edge  
 Out-gleamed, though that was ruthless, her cold eye  
 Though that was hard, this glitter'd adamant.  
 Down by his side a wondrous wallet hung  
 In shape and fashion such as shepherds wear  
 But of strange make—for of fresh river reeds  
 Cunningly woven was that pastoral scrip  
 And grass blades green as emerald ; midst of which  
 For every blade had life and character  
 Decking the lush meadow here and there with art  
 Like Nature's started up strange flowers so fair  
 In shape and beauty of petal intricate  
 As knew no earthly garden, they would seem  
 To scorn as well for their wild rarity  
 And freshness the remotest forest dews,  
 So fragrant they in odour seemed like souls.  
 Fingers 'twould seem of girls or freshest nymphs  
 Of Artemis, souls virgin to whom flowers  
 Come natural, with random loving skill  
 Had decked each nook and teeming interspace  
 Of the grass green huge marvel, that strange bag.  
 Then while I stood and plied my boyish wit  
 Its use and purpose ignorantly teased  
 To fathom—thou in thy great hand took'st mine  
 And shooting wisdom from thy eyes to teach  
 From thy bright sagacity, in friendly tones  
 "Boy," said'st thou, with grave smile, " 'tis thou shalt slay  
 Her whom thou see'st creation's heart-frost here



## BOOK IV

Glass'd in my shield Medusa. Thou for me  
 Shalt from the world's far end, her dead face fetch  
 To deck my aegis with her stony gaze  
 To awe-strike and confound thy Father's foes  
 Say then, and swear clasping thy hand in mine  
 'Tis I shall be that figure darkly cloaked  
 And darkly helmed invisibility  
 To hat me go upon this glorious quest  
 Mine the strong hand with Herpe's crooked blade  
 Gleaming in adamantine hardness there  
 Her stony neck shall sever at a stroke  
 And in that flowery wallet purse her head  
 World-harming. Say! shall it be thou, come swear." "  
 So did'st thou conjure me, to which I said  
 "Yea goddess with thy help and him to aid  
 My Father—By his glorious head I swear."  
 All's plain, all's clear. Those boyish words come back  
 With claim insistent, yes, with rallying call  
 They urge me to the fierce imperious quest  
 Those few words thou hast churn'd up from past years  
 Pearls, radiant from the blue depths of that sea  
 Childhood's divine great hearted simple trust  
 Re-oath me to the splendid enterprise.  
 O what need goddess now for useless words  
 Keep me not lingering in vain conference  
 My captured ardour burns for the great road  
 See, I shake off compunctious parleying  
 And frail demur. For these few, these boyish words  
 I hear them like a trumpet's rallying call  
 In words entangled, shamed back to the deed  
 I shall not flinch to its relentless worst  
 The awful grandeur of titanic glooms  
 To all it offers, horror, pity sheer.  
 O pardon that I wavered, that it seemed  
 On brink of act to adult courage hard  
 And conscience guided valour, this exploit  
 Swift easy simple to my childhood's dream.  
 Why stay'st thou the doubt I had is gone  
 The world's large bliss, perfection to flower hence  
 Not for a moment would I linger now  
 This grimness fruiting good together, mightily  
 Fulfil themselves all in this savage grand



## PERSEUS

Benignant quest. Where is it then the sheer blade,  
Where the grass green wallet? Show it me  
My road. At once on the tremendous lead  
Ship me for the sundown then or bid wings  
Start from my shoulders, wings for the world's end  
Or do but stretch thy finger, lift me up  
And whirl me on the mighty quest away.'  
A silence ominous, a sense of peril  
Felt in night's starry hush through earth, air, sea  
Through all things. Is it, she mines at the world  
Medusa! Ah! what then goddess sublime  
Doth thy majestical composure mean  
This dreadful hush and reticence of thee!  
Thou thrill'st me on this road most terrible  
Wild to be gone, yet standest calm thyself  
And mak'st not stir thy heavenly regard  
Turn'd motionless listening to some sound  
Heard in the distance. Hark now I hear it  
Ah! what is it that with loud angry peal  
As of some far-blown trumpet through the night  
Speaks to my blood and makes my bristling hair  
Start to the eager summons and stand erect,  
What should it be else but summons loud  
My Father's awful voice! Far thunder heard  
My signal at once to take the perilous road  
Quick thy shield of foresight give it me  
O quick, the wallet and the sword adamantine  
Despatch me on the way Goddess, the road  
What element so ever, earth, sea, air  
So thou guide Pallas. Lead! I follow thee  
Forth let us fare upon the terrible way.  
So saying he some strides impatiently  
Took in his ardour, but beholding her  
He stood his sword beneath his armpit thrust  
Turned back astonished. Fretted to be stayed  
And with dumb hand deprecating delay  
He beckon'd her and wildly westward waved  
Then looking up attentive he was 'ware  
Of a swift change, he marvelling beheld  
In immobility of grandeur fix'd  
Still listening in that earnest attitude  
A splendour than aught earthly is, more real



## BOOK IV

Fade shadowy in the moonshine. Half defined  
 Glimmering apparition momentarily  
 On point to vanish she already towered  
 Beyond his reach distant yet how dear  
 Smiled she on him never so heavenly  
 Yet friendly sweet from her celestial lips  
 Had sunn'd on him that holy smile of hers  
 And close near to him rang her celestial voice,  
 'Dar'st thou Perseus come? The dreadful way  
 I usher? And dost thou at last that road  
 Glimpse in its naked terrors. What! thou dar'st?  
 My Perseus now, at last the son of Zeus  
 That hero dauntless prince of my own heart  
 Thou shalt! Seed of the Thunderer dost thou feel  
 Divinely fretted, this world urging call  
 To action? And shall Pallas stay unmoved  
 But 'tis the Father's wisdom his sage ruth  
 And care for thee, for one day yet before  
 The mighty embarkation, ere thou launch  
 On seas inhuman, for Titan shores thou goest  
 He gives thee time, though brief for preparation  
 Settle thy earthly business and wind up  
 Think of thy noble mother, how thou shalt  
 For her provide, and take of her farewell.  
 One day Zeus gives from dawn to rosy dawn  
 Wherein to battle and beat down thy foes  
 Wherein to wean from earth and Danaë  
 Thy dedicated ardour. The next morn  
 Must find thee clean his warrior for the West.  
 As for that piercing signal shrilled far down  
 Disturbed our conference, 'tis no thunder word  
 Sky pealed with rending flash to haste thy going  
 But that long wished for angry trumpet call  
 Blast upon blast reiterate to announce  
 The landing and approach of that great host.  
 Stay not: but fly in aidance of thy friends  
 Surprised, borne down by mass'd resistless weight  
 Of sweeping trampling numbers. Hark! they fight.  
 Some-one hath blundered. Sleep, as I guess  
 Taking soft vantage of this starry hush  
 So perfect hath with stealing drowse disarm'd  
 All wakeful vigilance of eye and ear



## PERSEUS

And foiled thy well-planned ambush ; Sleep wrought for thee  
This sore mischance. Yet thou too art to blame  
Puzzling perplexing thy courageous heart  
With bat-eyed caution, conscience all-astray  
To look thy Father's gift-horse in the mouth  
This great exploit which thou should'st have ta'en  
As it came, in frank simple faith at once  
No question asked, without a word bestrid—  
Breathed but a brief pledge of thy promise given  
Hadst thou done so, thy captain's instinct had  
Pressing upon thee spurred to instant act.  
By many a precious moment thou ere this  
Hadst for thy dangerous sleep upon the flowers  
Exchanged for the wakeful vigilance of walls ;  
Soon, then hadst thou shied out those ambushes  
That for thee foiled well-planned strategy  
See the wild beacon blazes up alarm  
Soon to the peril shall Olpae's sleeping streets  
Throng with 'wildered men and marching feet.  
Wait not for them to follow. To the fray!  
Yet hast thou time. Quick then ply yon tower,  
That tower, see, that commands yon sally port,  
Filming the eye of darkening strategem  
Quickly devise another. Like a bolt  
Fall on thy enemies while yet thou mayest  
Run thither and with each step brand this home,  
He that would act must act, no time for thought  
So quickly brief the irremediable choice  
For rich is all great action in the world  
Precious ambrosia for the lip of Zeus.  
Mindful of that majestic enterprise  
To which thou art sworn liegman, heed not aught  
To that all else, the hurtling clash of war  
Thy enemies, thy mother are but straws.  
Tomorrow then we meet at sunrise flush  
The place : Penacte's lone surf shatter'd beach.'  
So saying from his dim mortal sight she fled.  
Breathless gazing after her he stood  
Longing to stay her, with a thousand thanks  
On his tongue and lip, his thought churned heart,  
Strangling—a poor utterance barely  
The blessèd spot where she stood worshipping



## BOOK IV

Alert and calm in marble thought he stood  
 To breathe one prayer for courage in the strife  
 Wit, inspiration. Louder and more loud  
 Came upon his ear the far fury of fight  
 A mightier thunder indescribable  
 Each dreadful sound on Ares' threshing floor  
 Even the wind and tempest of his flail.  
 A prince of action, born to marshal men  
 How eager now he stood to read that torn  
 And tempest fluttered volume blood-inscribed.  
 At the third bastion toward the eastern gate  
 That way it roll'd the trampling and the cry  
 There was the medley thickest, the wild charge  
 Splintering spears, curses, oaths and cries  
 The swaying shock and angry shouts of hosts  
 At tight grips wrestling in the lock'd melee  
 Groans of the fallen, mad cries of the slayer  
 That way he rushed. Yet strangely, he himself  
 Felt deep the strangeness of it, not of blood  
 And death and the rash deeds of dreadful war  
 He thought as now he ran, as to the ranks  
 Of the grim battle thus with headlong pace  
 He to the rally rushed of those brave fliers  
 Fighting against wild odds, ta'en by surprise  
 Falling uncaptured in a night assault.  
 Still in his ear Athene's great speech rang  
 And like a great light before him he beheld  
 The visionary splendour of that high quest.  
 Though oft in many a thrilled adventurous guise  
 Half stumbled in vague words which she had dropped  
 Never till now imagined, it had seized  
 The very heart of his fired hardihood  
 Enthralled his dreamy ardour fascinated  
 With rash anticipation of delight  
 In hasty glimpses he saw the road superb  
 From out the boyish memory of the shield  
 Of Pallas, back upon his lured thought leaped  
 Appalling in its loveliness, dead pale  
 That face, soul-freezing in fair tresses framed  
 And even as then one cold blue living coil  
 Darted fork-tongued in fierce presentiment  
 Hissed out at him, so now not one stray curl



## PERSEUS

But the whole snaky hydra brood swarming  
Together sprang like a dark cloud, aware  
That he toward them came, sped on his way  
No more that child but adolescent grown  
Budding heroic manhood for their bane  
And hers that baleful head whose hair they were.  
She now as to anticipate his grasp  
Of the keen sword, harder than her hard neck  
Raced followed after him, his very soul  
To freeze with interception of her face  
Ice his courageous heart with curdling look  
With loveliness and horror strangely one  
Haunt his bewildered gaze to madness driven  
His bold pace to frighten back as it seemed  
Lashed out at him her hideous serpent swarm  
To chill beforehand with stupefying venom  
The cold infection sucked from her despair  
Drowse to a hopeless stupour his bold heart  
In preparation for the gaze all stone  
The whole tormented way all distance-gulfed  
So to himself foreseeing the fell power  
He was to slay already after him  
Willing imagination to indulge  
Had given Medusa to his fear-thrill'd sight  
Though drinking thence a wild and dreadful joy  
Thus checked he his great heart and chid himself.  
'Art thou so pledg'd to splendid enterprise  
Thou canst not bide the angry chafe of it  
Back for a little nor hold at the stop  
To one day's retardation, check thyself  
To play the ape to a child's eagerness  
But he must don his new-bought bravery  
Try on at once those gew-gaws to demur  
The fiery conceit of this great thing  
With headlong splendour of anticipation.  
Let me check it with all I have to do  
Thou giver of this glorious exploit  
Athene, O thou patronness divine  
Look on me whereso'er thou hoverest  
Thou that blow'st up the smouldering spark  
And see how Perseus carries action through  
This small drop thou hast given me, all too little



# BOOK IV

To fill the tedious yawn of twelve bright hours  
 And all their starry sisters of the dark.  
 The time and place of that momentous act  
 In fiery letters have I jotted down  
 In memory's notebook, noted ere the light  
 Grow rosy over grey Penacte's beach  
 Lonely with breakers and the sea-gull's cry  
 There shall I tarry and await for thee.  
 Yet sage guardian the smouldering glow  
 Of that huge thrilling exploit, glorious deed,  
 Passed all conception of our reeling thought  
 This breach for history to march after me  
 Through the wide gap the jealous gated scope  
 Surging in great blind flames to singe  
 Eternal beauty which it cannot burn  
 I pray thee check into a controlled zeal.  
 O with this rage upon me, at the least  
 Suffer not goddess, the great blood that burns  
 Olympian to boil over, in this fire  
 Of slaughter I go to quench that I hear roar  
 Add such vast conflagration and o'er stride  
 The pale of noble self-control to strike  
 Any but he, Pelops, Belerophon  
 Schemer or dreamer what are they to me  
 Or Mermeros, the madman or the hulk  
 Huge Ptopliorthides—rebels indeed  
 To be taught, chastened brusquely to homage back  
 With riving dint of many a sobering helm-stroke  
 But he my mortal enemy who raised  
 This vain turmoil of armies, legioned fret  
 For liberty or curbless licence rather  
 Lawless, anarchical that bubbles o'er  
 And seethes in ebb of Pelasgian Argive sway  
 In a chid sovereignty to over-awe  
 Plot faction while in grey senility  
 Of Empire nods in my enforced exile.  
 He, he Polydectes, sole plotter he  
 Made conspirator each petty chief  
 Bribed with the hoards, Deucalian amassed  
 So easily from reappearing cities  
 Picked up, that ownerless unclaimed wealth  
 Wet riches of the Deluge sunken world



## PERSEUS

With illgotten gleam of gold unearn'd  
To have salaried the hireless loyalty  
Of faith Pelasgian, with that wicked wage  
Tainted through each small vein authority.  
He to have done all this and scot-free still  
Unscath'd go brag his crime's indemnity  
Who sole formentor still hath been of broil  
Be he Pallas in the ensuing fray  
Sole dedicated victim of this war  
Ere I go forth with sacrificial hand  
Vowed holy in the priestly purge of evil,  
Corroding cancer at the world's deep root.'  
So Perseus prayed while his armed footsteps spur  
Wounded the hard crag and struck white sparks.



## BOOK V

Then what of memorable had befallen  
 Meantime in sheer Seriphos, at the feast  
 Where gathered were the kings of emptied Greece  
 Preparing for majestic enterprise  
 Sing to my kindled thoughts, heroic Muse.  
 Slow in the halls of Polydectes there  
 Nine days the Captains feasted, while without  
 Upon the plain, along the city walls  
 Their armies camped, a billowy tented sea.  
 There hung they, Ares' breakers all a-hum  
 By day with heroes mailed, by night with fires  
 Burning a-stir and ready to be hurled  
 On the white walls of Olpae hid beyond  
 That doming mount, King Dicty's war-gloom'd towers.  
 But discord, diverging counsels stayed the leaders  
 Nine days and still they strove for many still  
 A remnant of the old allegiance felt  
 Faint shadow cast from Argos' noontide fame  
 Nor willingly would from Acrisius' hands  
 Nor his predestined slayer's exiled there  
 In those war-menaced walls of Dicty's city  
 O'er-night that glorious branch of empire wrest  
 But hew it smooth of new tyrannic shoots.  
 'Let Perseus,' so they cried, 'but solemnly  
 Swear from off the free-born necks to take  
 Of the great chiefs of Hellas, tribute harsh  
 And unjust by his imperious sires imposed.  
 And let him bid as Achaean custom bids  
 His mother, from our ranks, a husband choose  
 That it be never said to the reproach  
 And biting shame of Hellas, none was found,  
 Mid all that nerve and bloom and hardihood,  
 Worthy to wed with Hellas' loveliest rose.'  
 Some chiefs there were with reason on their side  
 Argued, not willingly that noble youth  
 Last shoot of that mighty sway Danaïdan  
 There shut in Dicty's city would outright  
 Give up his birthright: Of extremer views  
 Some others all as hot for freedom urged



## PERSEUS

With gestures fierce and angry clutchèd fist,  
 'Glory to Greece and Beauty's face,' they cried.  
 Though tables groaned with flesh of deer and sheep  
 Floors flowed with wine too prodigally served  
 No issue to their high dispute was found  
 Till scheming Polydectes saw dismayed  
 His own dark schemes back upon him roll  
 His coffers well-nigh empty. For 'twas he  
 Who unto Seriphos with bribe and toil  
 Sweat-dropping, had lured that many-chieftained host.  
 He brooded darkly: Then as a gambler who  
 Run far in loss with pain-tight lips and eyes  
 Bright with the hazzard-fever to retrieve  
 His loss upon one momentous throw  
 Of small cubes huge with fate stakes all, digging  
 From his palace dungeons, Magnes' son  
 Took now the last from all his glittering hoard  
 Not sparing even the wealth Deucalion  
 His grandsire's grandsire from emerging earth  
 With Pyrrha wandering picked, the sunken wreck  
 Of cities plundered. This bright corrupting gold  
 He showered to win the hesitating kings.  
 But on the tenth day that divinity,  
 Fairest in heaven who stirs the sap of spring  
 And stings to strife all creatures 'neath the sun,  
 Sweet Aphrodite on sheer Olympian peak  
 Stood and saw her mighty plans at pause.  
 The wind-waved tents yet citied the green fields,  
 And dim and pale in those heroic hearts  
 An ember she sighted the incrimsoning thought  
 Of Danaë. Saw on their seats the chiefs  
 In council hushed (deliberation tinged,  
 The sobered air,) and heard the grave applause.  
 Then from that prospect high, and glittering peak  
 Down-sprang she to retrieve the laggard hours  
 With purpose swift speeding o'er the deep  
 Olympian grass and fragrant flowers that yearned  
 Toward her celestial feet. Lightly she leapt  
 The torrent-throated gorge which murmured up;  
 Downward through the curling crimson clouds  
 She dived, she flew nor stayed till she alit  
 Upon the peaceful after-battle sward



## BOOK V

Where stretched in indolence of unquiet might  
 Against his shield rested the god of war,  
 He whom she sought, who at her swift approach  
 Turned wondering and with deep immortal throat  
 Murmuring like far thunder greeted her:  
 'What tidings bring'st thou that such vehemence  
 Shows in thy air divine and glowing mien  
 Unresting Cytherea; here come sit down.'  
 But on him rushed the battle ardent queen  
 Of Beauty, haste was in her glowing mien  
 Scorn in her blue eyes, lightening to behold  
 The sluggish god, thus chiding she burst forth:  
 'O Ares up! and shall we dally here  
 Or rather shall we like a mighty flail  
 Thresh the bloody floor and field of war  
 Together, I beneath my yoke to bend  
 Stubborn chaste Danaë, thou to quell  
 Her mighty son. I tell thee that great wave  
 Is with conflicting counsels torn while our  
 Opponent in this lull of me and thee  
 From chief to chief advancing whispers pause,  
 Urging cool judgement, and with weighty plea  
 With prudence and reflection leashes in  
 Fierce natural hearts. I tell thee that great host  
 In our chill absence faint and wither now  
 On Olpae's waiting walls. Its foam must break  
 In thunder or melt homeward back to sea.  
 Hast thou forgot the heroes of our hearts  
 Their boldest Polydectes, Enchespalos  
 And Mermeros three mighty bolts of war?  
 And shall we dally here amidst these flowers  
 Nor leap to earth those heroes to unleash,  
 Earth-urging elemental deities  
 Fierce Battle and Love, allow one woman weak  
 Deride me with her chastity superb  
 Thee, that young demigod, with matching rage  
 In war? Up city-sacker to the earth!'   
 Dark shivered the breath of Cytherea as she spake  
 But with far surge of anger Ares replied:  
 'Goddess, ah! tumultuous wherefore now  
 Comest thou with the red and stormy gold  
 Of thine exultant tresses showered about



## PERSEUS

The glory of thy vast primaeval limbs,  
 Last of Titanesses suffered still  
 In this bright air to work thy wayward will  
 Yoking war and drawing even heaven  
 For nothing but brief woman's fading grace  
 Down-showering in a storm of golden ruth.  
 What would'st thou with me? What deep wrong hath done  
 Against thee that unhappiest of all  
 Princesses that thou so pursuest her?  
 Canst thou not pity her, first daughter doomed  
 To mother her dear father's murderer  
 And by that father to the murderous deep  
 Committed with her little gold-haired son  
 In that drear night of tempest, then upthrown  
 In Dicty's net, then with the amorous rage  
 Of Polydectes forced in woods to dwell.  
 And now poor exile from Dicty's lofty towers  
 Leaned ever o'er the surging sea beholds  
 With heart that swells in grief remembering sad  
 Lost Argolis. What new-shaped pain for her  
 On thought's glowing anvil beatest thou  
 And to what purpose would'st thou tempt me now?  
 Me wherefore dost thou seek? Is it not enough  
 That I for thee have mustered in amorous might  
 Against the starry hush of Danaë  
 Heroic Greece for Beauty's shining sake  
 To dare, to bleed? O say again to what  
 Mad brilliance beautiful of hurtling spears  
 Wouldst thou tempt my stormy soul that yearns  
 Even amidst these flowers for the fray?  
 Why hast thou peopled earth so beautiful  
 With flashing stride of warlike youth whose armed  
 Superabundance threatens a general war  
 World-splitting nor now lacks a soon-found cause  
 Of Beauty amid lone rocks islanded.  
 But such thy way ever wantoning  
 With those primaeval powers of sweet desire  
 Sex-urging and generation to thee given  
 To stock with temperate blood the empty room  
 Of Nature, but thou wouldst rather overwhelm  
 With random rush of overpowering life  
 And thou wilt ever call my glittering scythe



## BOOK V

To reap the waving harvest of thick life.  
 But I no more will go to work thy will  
 Thunder and the majestic calm of Zeus  
 Provoked, who not for nothing on the vast  
 Of aching Titan shoulders curbed to law  
 Built the blue heaven in such serenity  
 Of steadfast peace. Let be the chaste repute  
 Of Danaë unravaged. Leave to Zeus  
 His Perseus' fate. Come let the fresh breeze slake  
 Thy breast of flame and let these spreading boughs  
 Drop on thy head melodious hovering thought.'  
 Thus Ares. But with lips disdainful, curled  
 In pity, the Idalian: 'What prate is this  
 Inert and indolent Olympian,  
 Die must they, the terrestrial creatures all,  
 What matter how? Only the immortal Powers  
 Forces of the world, forever live  
 Whether to create or destroy. But thou  
 Art one of us. Thee, Herë on Rhodope bore.  
 Well hast thou painted me Olympian,  
 If all creatures I flatter into life  
 I but to shatter mould the statue fair.  
 But Ares, flatter not thy drowsèd self  
 If I germinate too thick, alluring,  
 Thy nature all of storm, thou slaughterest.  
 By mention of my fellow Titanesses  
 Thou mindest me of that that blows my fire.  
 The stormy soul unrestful 'mid the flowers  
 I need no more to urge', she turned to go.  
 As when o'er night-hung streets a city fire  
 First rises o'er the quick assembling crowds  
 And sheds on those upturned faces hovering bloom  
 It smoulders yet and grows with smothering smoke.  
 But should a wind come hurrying down the street  
 Bursting all bonds the whole fierce conflagration  
 Leaps reddening to the sky, so Ares leapt  
 To join the goddess. Swift from the earth he caught  
 His spear tremendous like a child's plaything  
 Put on his helmet flashing celestial light  
 His shield invulnerable on his left hand.  
 Then with swift steps they both together rushed  
 And in a few moment's space the foam-flecked blue



## PERSEUS

Bestriding reached Seriphos' leaping towers.  
 Unseen they entered the pillared assembly hall  
 From end to end with serious faces thronged  
 Even as chidden boys inert, abashed,  
 So listening with indomitable arms  
 Crossed mournful o'er their proud erected chest  
 Sat with downcast eyes those fiery chiefs  
 By cool grey-headed wisdom and the power  
 Of Pallas in their midst, subdued and checked.  
 But quickly that high tide of passionate hearts  
 Sullenly ebbing in reluctant foam  
 Ares' and Aphrodite's coming turned,  
 She in the hearts of heroes as within  
 Some lashing pool where grows the hyacinth  
 Showed Danaë in her glorious bloom  
 As once with bleeding heart they saw her stand  
 Ere that repulse in Olpae's hall of dance.  
 He in their nostrils breathed the rushing blast  
 Of war, the flashing sword, the flaming deed  
 And now they knew not whence they felt again  
 A breeze and fresh within the spirit's sway  
 Hope's showering leafage green and scarlet love  
 Were blown in their hearts in clusters like a gale.  
 Who first in that assembly rose, oh! say  
 Muse of the loftier accent, lean and tell:  
 The Prince of Dryopians, it was he  
 Of warlike glances sparkling and visage bright  
 Spoke with words of dauntless eloquence:  
 'Kings', he cried, 'and have we long enough  
 Cramped our imperious hearts with listening dread,  
 Grey-beard doubts and wagging cautions wise?  
 Ah! sure some heaven-sent glamour held us then  
 Awe-shuddering from some wrath element  
 Sweeping in anger past us. What! Retire  
 With Olpae's wealthy walls so near in view?  
 What? Pity Perseus' young calamity  
 With the red shame behind us goading on  
 Shall thoughts loyal to the sway Danaïdan  
 All this vast armageddon bring to naught?  
 See, gentle Sirs, see brothers for of both  
 This sheer high-pillared hall affords a view,  
 Eastward showing the quiet haven where



## BOOK V

Your gallant fleet of full a thousand sails  
 Rides the blue ripple, and there your mighty armies  
 A tented city in green valley stretched.  
 So spake Enchespalos with flashing eyes  
 And hand triumphant pointing. Every gaze  
 His gesture followed. Seaward through the high  
 Aerial pillar spaces they beheld  
 War-galleons which their own strong arms had brought  
 With lusty strokes of their sea-ploughing oars  
 Bounding exultant with sense of adventure high  
 Even as their hearts now bounded at that large  
 Spectacle. With kindling eyes they looked.  
 Next inland where steep Seriphos upmurmurs  
 From her steep streets and 'twixt the half-hidden town  
 With her near towers and farther-ridging bloom  
 Of Accalessos, in the hollow vale  
 Saw billowing far and wide their own white camp  
 Pavilion on pavilion pennon-waved,  
 Tent after tent in thousands seen whose lanes  
 Showed a fierce gleam of armour and sent up  
 The stern deep hum of nations war-ward stirred.  
 Chieftains who erstwhile dejected, moody, drooped,  
 Now roused, now ready in instant act to blaze.  
 Then thunder rose amongst them, stamping fierce  
 With clapping heard and deafening roared applause  
 Enthusiasm like a Bacchanite tore  
 Through group on group of upheaved courages  
 Swift starting to their feet, while over seas  
 Of hubbub and ecstasy could be heard  
 Tempestuous cries, 'To Olpae, to Olpae, March!  
 Out Princess! No debating!' Whereupon  
 The mighty Polydectes strong and calm  
 As those sky-kissing craggy pyramids  
 That buttress from the huge Atlantic waves  
 Where eagles build lodged in aerial mists,  
 And where young homing eagles spray-dimmed find  
 A calm familiar refuge, so to these  
 Towered Magnes' son. Unto the monarch's side  
 Came those glory-shedding deities, blind  
 Imperial Strength and Beauty burning fair  
 One each side standing of their championed hero.  
 Down from his shoulders as a mantle hung



## PERSEUS

In every act and turn a majesty,  
 Imprẽssive grace, the grave and fluent word  
 Charmed his tongue as with arresting gesture  
 He uprose to deprecate such haste.  
 'Heroes of Hellas, since that natal word  
 Here in Seriphos unto me alone  
 Of Greeks this proud distinction you have given  
 With wide-armed hospitality to inn  
 Greece on her march to freedom, tarry yet  
 O shepherds of Pelasgian hardihood  
 That flock to war as sheep to pastures green,  
 No sweeter grass or greener than these towers  
 Of Olpae bursting now with emeralds  
 And bloom of Argive maidens, never yet  
 Lured pastureward the hungry hearts of kings.  
 Yet I pray you pause a little. I  
 Your host beseech, chief of the sceptred line  
 Of Aeolus who from Deucalion's blood  
 And Hellẽn that first sowed the noble name  
 Hellenẽs o'er the one wide half of Greece  
 Marshal the hardy peoples pebble-sprung.  
 Incentives to high-striding enterprise,  
 Pearls, opals or the vainly glittering gold  
 That weakens, which let souls less air and fire  
 Of indolent and gorgeous Asia crave.  
 I will not with the lamp of Beauty's face  
 To Greeks so clear a beacon strive to fire  
 Your hearts to war, though perish that poor day  
 When some fresh-moonẽd face most beautiful  
 With chafe of arming heroes cease to send  
 Hellas from end to end far murmuring.  
 But I shall make unto you one appeal  
 Shall through and through you ring unto the core  
 Of your brave hearts, if you indeed be Greeks,  
 I will but utter, one word "Liberty".  
 Feasting here this evening shall we fill  
 Beakers of health to plumẽd Victory  
 That rides the tumult and with creamy cheese  
 And good roast flesh, fatigueless vigour store,  
 While stretching to the pitch our hardy spirits  
 The sweet bards' noble music shall boast big  
 Our dim forefathers and there flashing deeds



## BOOK V

Remembering. Tomorrow to the call  
 Fresh with long sleep full nourished, shall with day's  
 First dawning the loud trumpet blow to march.  
 But first awaits our care, redoubted chiefs,  
 (Thence tacitly relinquished to the last,)  
 One task most grave, of anxious moment, kings,  
 Fraught with fierce difficulty which to save  
 And save this well-knit league from perilous  
 Dissension, must we our commander choose.  
 But who shall be named commander? Who my lords,  
 Of brain so cool, of such experienced eye  
 Shall captain burning captains and direct?  
 Kings must be heard, that more than kingly heart  
 With courtesy that flows unfalteringly  
 From the high rock of his conscious lineage.  
 One who in the furious turmoil of war's storm  
 Without confusion can lead us on. But who  
 Among our ranks of that all trusted worth  
 Stands so high o'er his fellows that when he beckon  
 With waved truncheon towards the glorious breach  
 Shall exact unquestioned obedience sweetly paid?  
 To that post pre-eminent I lay  
 A frank bold claim and with less eloquence  
 Of studied modesty, acquit me ye  
 Of brazen face, that know my peerless deeds  
 Since my heroic enterprises blown  
 In the broad ear of Hellas lifts me quite  
 O'er any king in valour or cool thought.  
 When marauding centaurs from the upper glen  
 Of Pelion bursting o'er all the subject plains  
 Thundering came, man-horse and woman-mare,  
 Fierce galloping in mained majestic troop  
 And filled the ways. With mighty stones they fought  
 Hurling against our ranks huge boulders heaved  
 With main force up, or tearing by the roots  
 Mighty pines; they galloped through as flails  
 Threshing our huddled mown battalions  
 Like chaff before their hurricane of hooves.  
 They left behind large fields of splintered rocks  
 Our heroes groaning, mangled, bruised and gashed,  
 They looted in the falling autumn, burnt  
 Our pleasant farms, our broachèd wine-casks ran;



## PERSEUS

The corn all trodden down they danced in riot,  
They raped and bore on mad careering backs  
Our divine shaped maids and beautiful tall youth  
Who torn, all pale, from slaughtered parents wailed.  
To that monstrous rout I offered fight  
Though all grew pale in wild confusion cast,  
Shunning the open and their trampling hooves  
Safe from the shelter of o'er-hanging rocks  
I shot them those two-figured gallopers  
With showers of drizzling archery so thick  
That Centaur and Centauress fell bloodily  
Rolling in dust and dying bit the earth.  
Then on the way of their cavalcades I placed  
Pits well covered o'er with specious turf  
But undertoothed with iron. I led on  
With feint of flight their onrush triumphing  
To a sharp unsaddling. Oh then was heard  
Such thunder as to Ossa's highest pines  
Reverberated, trembled the rocks and trees  
With neighs of savage anguish; wildly they fought  
Kicked, buffeted each other horribly  
Squirming on stakes, inextricably impaled.  
Such monarchs were my deeds of captaincy  
Glorious, that left all Greece wide-wondering,  
Loud blazoned since Strategus nor alone  
This. For when wafted for Seriphos' bane  
Borne by the bleak West wind and foaming surf  
Perseus came, a little gold-haired child  
And year by year in action towered and grew  
The dread of many foes but my sheer town  
Seriphos by the sea he could not sack  
For all his glorious rash intrepidity  
His brooding strategems and warlike skill,  
His stemless fury studied like the deep,  
Its waves, its winds, its stars the sailor knows,  
Not what ye deem, believe me who have proved  
Him to be in many a furious fight  
A terror more dark than Centaur's streaming mane  
A mightier force than those male-hearted maids  
That race Thermodon's river, far more daring  
His matchless might, now portentous grown for Greece,  
We march to quell, and to prove my claim



## BOOK V

Here as a challenge to competing chiefs  
 To pick who will, I throw my kingly sceptre.  
 So speaking on the polished marble floor  
 He flung the glimmering sceptre. Ringing loud  
 In silence deep it fell, a hush that none  
 Dared break though many a high-aspiring heart  
 Beat quick and eager wishful to take up  
 That splendid challenge. One sternly smiled  
 Though he spoke not the puissance that had broke  
 Oenomaus whirling car and fresh from sweet  
 Hippodameia seeking glory came  
 Nor uninflamed with proud imperial thoughts  
 From Asia Pelops, Tantalaus' glorious son  
 But shattering that high pillared hall now rose  
 Exultant clamour from those close-knit powers  
 The Seriphian's many cousined kin, sprung  
 From the blood of old Deucalion.  
 Not these alone, so Aphrodite willed,  
 But the whole assembly as taken by storm  
 Echoed the shout, 'Polydectes! lead  
 Oh captain's captain, brain of arisen Greece,  
 Oh second wisest Hellēn be our chief,  
 Deucalion!' So rang the vollied cry  
 And rife enthusiasm spread contagious  
 As billow unto billow clashing sends  
 Its lifted spray, as a down-sweeping gust  
 Goes clutching every struck wave by the top.  
 Which the more to swell stout Ptoliporthides,  
 Alector's son gigantic, towering rose  
 And topped with his voice the tumult, 'Gifts,  
 Bright golden gifts for our elected chief  
 Giftless!' So thundered he and at his word  
 They hastened those glad heroes to their tents  
 For linen bleached to snow, fair rustling silks  
 From furthest India or from labouring Tyre,  
 Silver and Cyanus, they brought, they heaped  
 By Polydectes' throne where proud he sat  
 Glorifying in new grandeur as he thanked  
 Each lordly giver breathing wide wafts of fame.

That moment far upon the Olympian peak  
 Just under the high snows, whose radiance



## PERSEUS

Not sun's nor moon's, creative Omnipotence  
 World guiding, world creating hath upbuilt  
 Imperishable habitation aloof  
 Above the thunder, mansions not of stone  
 Or marble, but whose brooding wall consists  
 Of Wisdom sheer, Peace blue and infinite  
 Spread for heavenly roof and the strength  
 Of supporting pillars Law incarnate.  
 There in the golden hush Athene stood  
 In calm expectation of the nod  
 That shakes the world. But still the austere Power  
 Mused his majestic brow thought-involved.  
 Then Pallas spoke in awe-soft pleading tones,  
 'O Father throned above the sorrowing world,  
 Shall insolence, oppression and brute power  
 Vex the great heart of virtue and with fear  
 Shake fairest innocence. Behold they march  
 On Olpae! Phalanx upon phalanx march,  
 Kings band their powers, o'erwhelming Ares leads.'  
 Then murmuring spoke the Sempiternal power:  
 'Thou knowest how in the dim purlieus of night  
 Beyond the stalls of the sun whither have fled  
 For the fair advent of invading light  
 And law and harmony the Titan powers,  
 Groans to resurrection one last wave  
 Of that primaeval sea and of its ebb  
 Avenger: for so dooms necessity  
 And Nemesis, individual law  
 So on its own self back rebounds all force  
 With answering force of leaping Nemesis  
 Even ours that to bring forth from anarchy,  
 This orb of unshook order calm and bright,  
 Violently the ancestral chaos wrenched  
 From which we sprang and from that violence  
 As by just balance, springing see, O child,  
 She issues, I her curls already see  
 Far in the dusk a-swarm with hissing life  
 Lift eager, as of this fair universe  
 She snuffs the sweet destruction wafted up  
 With nostrils wide. Soon striding shall she come  
 And nothing then will stop her felon stride.  
 Seas in a moment frozen at her face



## BOOK V

And forests into one dead emerald  
 Withered before her. Man shall cry and run  
 And lift wild hands the glory pitiless  
 To shelter from their lid implorèd eyes  
 That needs must gaze in fascinated dread  
 And shall gaze till the mighty passage leave  
 Their statued millions staring up to heaven  
 Forever in disastrous marble dumb.  
 But naught the gods can do to intervene ;  
 For the crime unnatural committed  
 Of that immense unfilial overthrow  
 We are debarred by the just decree of fate  
 To intercept such waste of whitening plains.  
 Now trembles the pale approaching time,  
 Now fateward totters the huge moment ripe  
 When for petrification of all life  
 She comes, bane of creation, Ceto's child.  
 Speed Pallas, unto Seriphos go straight ;  
 My son, my far-famed Perseus, he alone  
 A mortal championing immortal gods  
 May save perchance that fatal stiffening.  
 Wherefore I, to bend his power to greater  
 Daring, have stirred already his large heart  
 With abnegating pangs of self-sacrifice.  
 Alone he goes to challenge at the feast  
 So many mutinous kings and stay their march.  
 Divert thou his hardihood, his steps  
 Direct to foamed Penacte. There make light  
 His mortal heavy heels, oar his feet  
 With fair-floating plumes ; then tested proved  
 Despatch upon this momentous enterprise.  
 Scarce ended rolling in his awful beard  
 The Thunderer's mighty voice when from the peak  
 Not in obedience merely, burning she  
 Sprang through widest ether, through large air  
 O'er isles moon-blanced, one blinding lightning flash ;  
 A hurrying in her ear, she straightway reached  
 Seriphos. There up the topmost step  
 Of Polydectes' palace stairs she found  
 Already come the son of Danaë,  
 (Frail providential weapon against fate  
 Caught up by gods in breathless haste



## PERSEUS

A world's deep peril to ward off,)
 Preparing at once with steps that knew no fear
 To enter and with apparition bold
 Shake the great hearts assembled in that hall,
 Nor noticed, earth's last hope, by what high guidance
 He safely passed the ruddy scrutiny
 Of blazing watch-fires and the sentries thick,
 The murmuring hostile camp. A moment gazed
 Pallas upon her champion, with such joy
 As feels a questing lioness to find
 Her strayed cub far from his mountain den
 After long search near dangerous neighbourhood.
 In bright starlight she scanned his kelleos
 Cased in rich youth and saw that manly face
 Made stern with thoughts indomitable, not now
 Courteous and lovely but all lit up with ardour
 With such inspired daring as from tense
 Foot to poised head, even to the tips
 Burned of his golden tresses. At his eye
 Peeped danger forth as from a lion's den.
 Then masked in perishable mask, Pallas
 In guise of one that had from feasting come
 To air his hot flushed brow, to Perseus spake
 In wonder: 'Who art thou O lovely youth?
 Or can it be? Impossible! But no!
 I know thee son of Danaë for that robe
 From sire to son ever handed down
 Bright appendage, from Argive royalty
 Inseparable, where Nile's lotus dreaming sways
 Upon a stream of purple, speaks thee plain.
 What daring beyond mortal reach of thought,
 Hath fooled thee thus with temerarious foot
 Into the mortal congress of thy foes?
 Know that by streak of morning's dawn they march
 Against thee and in this moment in their cups
 Their bacchanal of spirits thou may'st hear
 Even from these steps how they with death
 Marry thy name unscabbing their swords.
 Dar'st thou confer? But perchance thou com'st
 With terms of composition to buy off,
 (No shame to thee), their overwhelming odds.
 Gold brightens the more in those alluring hands



## BOOK V

And wrankles deep in many a haughty heart  
 Insulted. Let my familiar face well-known  
 And willing feet convey thee through their midst.  
 I restless led by heart adventurous here  
 Pledged, from my native eyrie wandering came  
 To seek among these wandering convoy kings  
 Tempest congenial, I am no enemy  
 Toward thee, but of friendly thought, a sluice  
 From that same fount that rolls thee from afar  
 So huge a surge. Aithalides, my name  
 My father Thrasymason and my home  
 Steep Glaphyre glassed in Boebeis lake.  
 There Perseus upon the sands oft of thee  
 I thought and my ancestress thy fair kin  
 Whom Palaos my father's grandsire's sire  
 Goal of the panting foot race clasped to wife.  
 Achaian and Aeolian melt in me.  
 So masking in our clay her face divine  
 Athene: to which thus the son of Zeus:  
 'O shoot of her that sistered the fair name,  
 Hypermestra, whose sweet immortality  
 Married to pity bards in Argos sing,  
 And wilt thou strained from Danaüs' mighty loins  
 Colleague thee with those dogs of Aeolus  
 That bay the Argive lion, proud for that  
 The long legs of their mountain-climbing sire  
 Deucalion from drenching saved his skin.  
 But come thou if to accompany my steps  
 So yearn the son of Thrasymason bold  
 After me, be witness with what hoards,  
 What treasures I buy off the menaces  
 Of kings whose necks my father's footstools were.  
 So speaking through the haughty frowning doors  
 O'er which the Cyclopean masons' work  
 Towered up in shadowy silver to the moon  
 Perseus undaunted audacious youth still strode  
 Onward with youthful stride, and behind him still  
 Gigantically dim like an eclipse  
 Loomed the goddess. Thicker and thicker now  
 Dinmed in their ears the warriors' revelry  
 And glimpses through the vaulted corridor  
 Came, and savoury steam of meat as the wide hall



## PERSEUS

They entered, nor once blenched the son of Zeus  
 But onward went through files of mortal foes,  
 Oft hearing, as he went, his own name spoke  
 With dreadful imprecations or loud-mouthed oath  
 To combat threatening with clutchèd sword.  
 So deeply in their heart wrankled revenge  
 And red insulted thought. But him toward whom  
 The dolorous bursts of battle their wine lashed  
 None felt, none saw, though past their sleeves he brushed,  
 Till reaching now the central open space  
 Where toward the roof two mighty pillars soared  
 And shone in the torchlight blaze right opposite  
 The throne of Polydectes, Perseus paused.  
 Then slowly were the listening chiefs aware,  
 As in the rich vibrant hush their eyes  
 They lifted, of their great antagonist  
 Standing against a pillar while his face  
 Blazed with an inconceivable inspiration  
 Of superhuman daring. As a pool  
 When a flung stone has fallen, everywhere  
 Splashes, and with that waves, go eddying  
 In ever widening circles to the brim  
 So round the hall astonished murmur spread  
 From chieftain unto chieftain what hath chanced,  
 And as that broken watery looking-glass  
 Sinks back to a contrasting calm more deep  
 And a more breezeless stillness, so that whole  
 Assembly in a stunned admiring silence sat.  
 Each froze, the sitter sat, the leaner leaned  
 The drinker held as in a marble hand  
 The wine cup while his pale face seemed to be  
 A foil to the dancing ruby that he held,  
 Following the way interrogation first  
 Came to them where Perseus statued stood  
 Though hemmed around with many hundred eyes.  
 But loud above the thrilled arrested banquet  
 Shouted the brave intruder: 'Kings of Greece,  
 Pelasgians brave, O Captains of far fame,  
 Great feudatory lieges of that sway  
 Danaïdan which long since my fathers built  
 And my grandfather, old Acrisius, still  
 Maintains with agèd sceptre tremblingly.





## BOOK V

Was Danaë's face the occasion, what is it  
Ye seek renownèd princes? Liberty,  
Sweet liberty, the birthright of brave men?  
Iced in degenerate slumber has a ray,  
Shining, old heroic memories  
Crossed your hearts, great thoughts that are perchance  
The phantoms of your mighty ancestors  
Who have from ancient sleep re-arisen  
Indignant of a subjugated soil.  
Marvelling, came I hither, for I heard  
That wafted from your far-off pleasant homes  
Seeking me and the cause, the glorious cause,  
Beauty's face, the face of Danaë  
Wafted from many a city ye are come  
Oaring your gallant navy to beseige,  
Glimmering in moonlight, the quiet harbour-stead.  
Burning ye came, indignant at the yoke  
My fathers planted on you, to avenge  
In me, their last descendant, tyranny.  
Do I interpret warriors your dumb thought?  
The son of Zeus, to slake you have I come  
For o'er the bloody conquest of my corse  
The road to all fair Olpae and beyond  
The way to Achaean sceptre truly lies.  
Say which of you the triple prize  
Will put into fierce brave arbitrament  
Of mortal flashing swords? Let him step forth.  
So speaking against the column's ample breadth  
His back he threw and drew his flaming brand  
That from its sheath with formidable edge  
Leapt like the brandished lightning of his sire.  
Wide wonder and admiring murmur ran  
Through all that hostile, hushed assembly, thrilled  
To see his noble port unparalleled  
There in extremest perils splendidly  
Alone confronting their assembled rage.  
Not one of all those heroes durst take up  
The challenge, or the daring challenger  
Bear down with spears as well they might,  
Curbed sensibly beneath the cloudy lour  
Of dim Athene's aegis o'er them hung  
Unseen, but felt like conscience in their heart.



## PERSEUS

Stupidly robbed of action they remained  
 Motionless, all silent, all except  
 Seriphos' king ; he long indurated  
 To fearful goodness by the hardening beat  
 Upon his heart of passions fierce and dark  
 And aspirations lurid that by light  
 Of their own fires calamitously forged  
 His step to ruin and led armoured on,  
 Sat in a terrorless composure, then  
 Seeing none stirred and seeking to avert  
 Derision of so many dumb'd by one  
 That might befriend the brief-dashed courages  
 Of heroes and detain, till fury woke  
 Against the rash intruder, thus bespake :  
 ' Welcome to my poor banquet son of Zeus,  
 But ye my guests why stare ye thus amazed,  
 This is the famous hero, fosterling  
 Of Dictys whom so great was your desire  
 But now to see, here unhop'd for strayed.  
 There only lacked to crown hilarity  
 Thy presence, prince of men. Nay, be not afraid  
 Nor draw as in alarm thy burnished sword.  
 These are no mutinous kings against thee come  
 In westering clouds of red rebellion ;  
 May never Argos' sun of glory set,  
 Unruffled bloom thy mother's holy cheeks,  
 And Olpae still that sumless treasure keep !  
 Here are no foes to thee. To grace my board  
 My kinsmen, some, the bold Aiolidai  
 And kingly neighbours of many sea-washed isles  
 Invited to my birthday feast they come,  
 This banquet for them given. Behold the gifts  
 Shaming the lofty prodigality  
 That gained for me my hospitable name,  
 They feasting have to Polydectes given.  
 Hast thou no gift O son of Danaë  
 That hast this long time sojourn'd in my land  
 Thou, the rich heir reported of the wide  
 Argolic land and Argos lofty-walled,  
 No belt, no sword, no proud careering steed ?  
 Perseus had fixed on him a sidelong glance  
 Of fury, his tyrant once, now hardened into



## BOOK V

His planning and persistent enemy.  
 Those dark features he now saw upon him  
 Smiling down in scorn and mockery  
 Surrounded with the tributary strength,  
 Hellas in mutiny, to wrench at once  
 Life, mother, kingdom. Intolerably stung  
 Forth started Danaë's son with desperate sword  
 Gripped mortally to force to single fight  
 Before the face of his confederates  
 Seriphos' king. But the celestial Power  
 That high above the heaven sublunary  
 Hung starlike for the world's salvation vast  
 Ripening in watchful patience quickly seized  
 Advantage of heroic rage, as leaps  
 Far on the stretching plains of Brazil  
 A horse tamer up on the untamed back  
 Of a wild colt, the goddess stretched her hand  
 And from the lips of the bold hero snatched  
 Words of fiery challenge, dashed his thoughts  
 So wide astray ravished with ecstasy  
 Through the blue empyrean, to far  
 Things, lofty perils, dreadful mighty deeds  
 Heroic seen in visionary swirl  
 That prophet-like with inspiration glimpsed.  
 He answered, 'Ruler of Seriphos' blue isle  
 Lo! from the baths of sunset, such my zeal  
 To serve thee, from the doorways of the dusk  
 A terrible and beauteous gift I bring,  
 No belt, no sword, no proud careering steed  
 But the grim Gorgon's head with horror curled  
 That lifted up with this adventurous hand  
 Shall put thee to a marble wondering.'  
 So crying from the lighted banquet forth  
 Wrestling in grasp of his own mighty thoughts  
 That with the risk and difficulty sheer,  
 Engrossed his fiery fancy Perseus went  
 Wrathful of dim perplexing dreams  
 Not all at once consenting to their power  
 Curbed to the bit, most like an unbroken steed.  
 Furious he strode, fain to re-enter yet  
 The thronged hall, for still imperiously  
 The last strong feeling swayed him, he desired



## PERSEUS

To seek his foe, to slay or to be slain  
 As he but now had aimed. So much of earth  
 Still lingered, but in vain, for mightier yet  
 Lured that heroic vision, blue heavens bestrid  
 Springing with air-drunk heels gloriously  
 Beyond the puny, mortal, mundane earth.  
 The whirring of unnumbered wings he heard  
 And glimpsing in a lurid sheen he saw  
 A face tremendous of dreadful loveliness  
 That glistened hydra-headed and rose above  
 The fade and perish of creation dim  
 Whose gaze the gazer slew, death beautiful.  
 Titanic forms, titanic visages  
 Led on his foot, beseeching with clasped hands :  
 So tortured by visions backward and before  
 Perseus went and behind Athene came  
 With looks of cloudy grandeur, she had felt  
 Ares and Aphrodite in the midst  
 And burned with ire that ever yet  
 On earth should license and needless slaughter spread.  
 At the portal menacing she paused  
 Turned and severely her fiery aegis shook,  
 And in swaying folds of tempest bickering  
 The lightning flashed as thunder rolled on earth  
 A sound that coming on that silence sent  
 Terror immense through love-impassioned hearts,  
 Shook spirits most martial, steady, and awe-struck  
 Quailed those hid deities who guilty cowered.  
 Then into the night she went with Perseus striding  
 Before her, towards the solitary cliff  
 Of Achete where Seriphos had ended sheer  
 On rock and foam and thither with nearing step  
 More quick she pushed her lion-hearted prey,  
 Hunted to be hunter glorious of Gorgons.  
 At last where a loud rivulet leaf-gloomed fell  
 There Perseus stood moon-glimmering, at bay.  
 The sands before, the level infinite  
 Of surrounding sea no further passage gave  
 But horse, dashing cried their 'Nay'. Impatient  
 He turned as though to ask the eternal rocks  
 Desperate, conjuring the inscrutable earth to say  
 What tortured him, wherefore these visions, why



## BOOK V

Thus led unto this solitary verge  
Beneath the stars, when lo! before him stood  
Majestic as the cliffs that o'er her towered  
Into the night, Athene fathomless.  
Her face as the deep sea with the purpose strange  
And mighty meaning for him, as the sea  
That ever in her whisperings seems on point  
To speak and tell her infinite mystery.



## BOOK VI

So, smiling down on him, Athene spake.  
 And Perseus, all emboldened, all on fire  
 With those great words, that gave to listening hope  
 (Intense upon Seriphos beach he stood,)

The glorious offer;—wanderings wonderful  
 Through the mysterious vast unvoyaged air,  
 On these his wingèd heels that could not tire,  
 On to the heavenly plunge Hesperian  
 And isles that swoon beyond the sunset; strange  
 Adventures, strange sights, perils thrilling strange,  
 The vengeance for his mother's mournful face  
 Ripe to his hand, to speed past Titan sorrows,  
 To rescue Beauty by the sea distressed,  
 And that dim Gorgon dreadfulness,—the whole  
 Aerial fairy journey unconceived,—

Sprang upward, seized with joy. And with the bright  
 Ardour uplifted clear from off his feet  
 At emptiness upgrasping, with a shout  
 That sent the sea-gulls crying from their cliffs,  
 He rose into the air, he rushed, he mounted.  
 As feels the full-fledged eagle, soaring first,  
 His undulant new wings,—so tardy come  
 To this wide waftage,—now some early morn  
 With a keen sunward longing slowly rise  
 Above the highmost crag of rarest flower,  
 Above the dizzy precipices huge  
 Above the steep snow-dazzle and the last  
 Lone toppling peak, with short sharp cries, with fierce  
 Exulting, sheer into the blue expanse.  
 So mighty to sustain terrestrial limbs  
 Upon the baseless air, Perseus felt first,  
 Freshening like wind beneath him, those great wings  
 Beautiful, swift, that Pallas to his heels  
 With her own awful hands had stooping tied.  
 Up, right into the blue immensity  
 Of heaven, aglow with presage of the dawn,  
 They bore him, ever up, without his own  
 Motion or stir, in soft ascent: till now,



## BOOK VI

So high was reached the dreadful escalade  
 Beneath him like a haze blue-wooded seemed  
 Seriphos, and the sea a far off flash  
 Through gulfs of air so steep that he must pause  
 Dashed at his own audacity. He leaned  
 Anxious upon a wind, whose streaming rush  
 Against him buoyed his limbs, and hesitated:  
 In that too easy flight not all so soon  
 Confiding. Vast, impassable it showed,  
 This sea that drank his utmost thought, this hushed  
 Diaphanous wave, whose bottom was the world;  
 This gap, that from heroic ardour held  
 Within its airy deep, somewhere enisled  
 Mid crags stupendous, hemmed with angry foam  
 Medusa and the grisly quest,—those locks  
 Titanic, serpent-coiling, that even now  
 To his outstretched and fascinated grasp  
 Glistened in vision,—a precipice of air  
 Before him, and his foot upon the brink.  
 Thrilled and allured, not doubting but to fall  
 Headlong through unsustaining vacancy  
 One stride he took, one hesitating stride  
 From sunbeam to sunbeam. They bore him sure.  
 Dread and deep shivering wonder took the soul  
 Of Perseus now, as breathless he paced on.  
 It seemed they were no aid extrinsical  
 Those mighty plumes, though by a goddess given  
 But natural heel-grown pinions, to his bone inbred,  
 And tingling with his own desire,  
 To bridge the abysmal air with mortal feet  
 And navigate the boundless firmament,  
 Slowly he fared, in awe of his own ease;  
 Until at last rejoicing in the wide  
 Wash of the breezes,—the keen air that swept  
 So fresh around him, filling with pure life  
 His vigorous breath delightedly inhaled,  
 He ran. He revelled in the new found power  
 That eagle-winged his footsteps. Down the rash  
 Abyss he sped, all diffidence dispelled.  
 The whole bright space of heaven now he scoured,  
 And gazed upon the yet unrisen sun.  
 He flew, he skated on the prostrate winds.



## PERSEUS

To yon Auroran cloud that burned and towered  
 Rose-flushed in the vast dawn his ankles yearned ;  
 To yon Auroran cloud they bore him soon.  
 Then, as the osprey, poised in deepest sky  
 Invisible herself, sees suddenly  
 On far down waves a momentary fish  
 Gleam,—with so swift a glancing, with a plunge  
 So certain through unfathomed air he fell.  
 He skimmed along the tops of foaming waves  
 And with spray-drenchèd feathers, and with heart  
 Aglow from that triumphant mastery,  
 All ardour, all desire, not doubting now  
 Successfully to speed the mighty voyage  
 Back to his dizzy station mounted swift.  
 And now above the shoulders of the world  
 Heaved the great sun, with sudden manes of gold  
 And car upblazing. Into the chill wave  
 His splendour warmed and thrilled the mossy glooms  
 Of dew-drenched mountain forests, and each cloud  
 Flushed through and through with light, and round the face  
 Of Perseus cloaked about with mighty thoughts  
 Came glorying: as like a runner stript,  
 He to his airy race-course leaned superb.  
 He paused, he felt the glory in his blood,  
 And radiance changing the wide universe.  
 As some bold aeronaut that hath arisen  
 From throngs of upturned faces, and all night  
 Sailed darkling over unconjectured lands,  
 Now as day breaks, in awe and ecstasy  
 Leans forth: for he beholds through gulfs of gray  
 Far down, through glimmering seas aerial,  
 Illimitably shining the great world  
 From Alpine snows unto Saharan sands  
 Distinguishable ; while his light balloon  
 Spins o'er the dawn-flushed Mediterranean  
 So wonderful the prospect that now burst  
 To Perseus' kindled eyes, beneath him cast  
 Shore beyond shore, soft purpling in the light  
 Sea hung o'er flashing sea, peak behind peak,  
 Forest o'er forest. Straight with grandeur seized  
 Of that imperial vastness down he flung  
 Prone on the air, in passion and delight



## BOOK VI

To roam above the beauteous face of earth.  
 Which way sped first the sky exulting wings?  
 Over Seriphos isle. For 'twas the aim  
 Of Pallas to assay her champion's soul  
 Whether for that most terrible emprise  
 By courage fitted, strength, and swift resource  
 And undistracted will concentrated high  
 O'er all things earthly. Therefore his young feet  
 New-schooled to tread the superhuman blue  
 Right o'er the beckon and appeal of earth  
 She led. The conscious pinions understood  
 Her purpose, and with swift temptation flew  
 Low o'er the lovely isle of his exile,  
 The dear but alien earth that had so long  
 For Argos and the spacious heritage  
 And Tiryns' towering walls and Lerna mere  
 Made recompense with ocean murmured glens.  
 But with disdainful heart, Perseus flew on.  
 In vain the bay of Tarne came agleam  
 Beneath him, and the breakers and the reef  
 Where but a waif of ocean Dicty's took him  
 From Danaë's swooned breast: In vain the dells  
 Of Daskyle with all that slope of leaves,  
 Known to his boar-spear, swayed towards him;—sights  
 Familiar yet from this far height how strange  
 How lovely-fresh. But nor for novelty  
 Nor for remembrance paused the champion prince  
 Thought swifter yet than wings before him rushed  
 Towards the peril and rapture of those sights  
 Beyond, that his exultant boldness charmed,—  
 The flash of seas o'er leaped and race of lands  
 And that companioning of eagles' wings  
 O'er Hellas. Now the mystic swooning dark  
 Of Acheron engulfed him, now his hand  
 Stretched to take boldly from eternal gloom  
 Invisibility that should elude  
 Gorgons. And with the splendid thought his eye  
 Shone answering ardour. Thus on buoyant dreams  
 Supported towards the blue hill peaks he sprang  
 The upcrowding peaks of Akalessos lone  
 As with a stride to clear them and sweep on.  
 When passing now the silver-eddied stream



## PERSEUS

Of Nonacris, down-looking he espied  
The whole plain and the valley sown with iron  
And the earth incensed with ardour of bright arms,  
Through rolling dust came up the rushing tramp  
And hum of a proud army on the march.  
The glitter dazzled him, though in the skies:  
And even in that pure air he smelled the dust  
Whilst the high mountains threw in echoes back  
The thunder and the murmur and the hooves.  
Down from his wings in wonder Perseus gazed  
Upon that struggling streaming river of men  
Nor knew his foes, so potent were the heavens;  
He, gazing thus, his own great heart bespake:  
'What throng of men and horses fills the vale  
Of Nonacris? as feathered from the gods  
I shoot towards the Gorgon west, and leave  
Seriphos far behind me. Bolt of Zeus!  
I do remember and oblivion  
Unclouds from off my dream-enthralled soul  
'Tis Polydectes! swift he scours the dust  
Toward Olpae, with a thousand snowing plumes.  
Ah dog! ah villian king! art thou so hot  
To sleep within the arms that havened Heaven?  
Sweep on, but to thy doom if truly Zeus  
Sustain these wings, and from the dreadful quest  
Return me in short days, in few short days,  
Zeus and Athene and this filial heart  
To take the long-owed vengeance. But behold!  
Banner on banner still, and mail on mail.  
I see the kings confederate with my foe  
Who come from all the broad Aegean, to woo,  
My mother. Ah, Pallas, what a world's breadth off  
Hast thou made swerve my purposes direct!  
I bearded Polydectes at his feast  
Last eve, and had by this brought low enough  
And for those rebel lordlings one by one  
Challenged them and such warrior-wooing kept  
Far from the dear repose of Danaë.  
But thou, inexorable, didst dissent.  
Thou, burning for the head with hydras curled,  
Didst, in the very utterance, dash my tongue  
Astray, and fill me with that boast inspired



## BOOK VI

And from that regal banquet led'st me forth,  
 The beggar of my own vast promises  
 Grasping at airy gorgons, to the sea.  
 Yet not for all these blood-committed spears,  
 Nor Olpae battered with the rage of war  
 Nor Danaë's palèd cheek, do I retract  
 My purpose, or abandon this wide air  
 Trusting in thee, and rather pleased to stem  
 The winds than to beat backward storming hosts.  
 So spake the air-borne hero feigning calm.  
 But inwardly his soul, upon the meat  
 Of conflict nourished and bright swords and war,  
 Yearned to participate in the delight  
 Of action. Every hardening muscle glowed  
 To match itself against such strengths renowned  
 As muttered fierce beneath him. Downward now  
 He stooped towards that glittering cloud of mail.  
 As some ease-fretted eagle from far heights,  
 To taste the approach of storm, into the breeze  
 Descends: Not otherwise the son of Zeus.  
 He flew along, rejoicing to behold  
 The painted shields and various device  
 That blazoned to the morning each great chief.  
 But now the deep woods swallowed all the host.  
 Upon a mountain shoulder came his feet  
 Brushing the heather. He looked up and saw,  
 Close hovering o'er his head, the misty tops  
 Of Akalessos, hung with forest dark.  
 Well knew the son of Danaë those peaks.  
 For thither had the sad sea heroine  
 Catching him to her bosom, fled, to hide  
 From the Seriphian king enamoured deep.  
 To his centre Akalessos shuddering knew  
 The bride of Zeus; and from his hollow pine  
 Teemed honey, from his crags the mountain-goats  
 Sent with swoll'n udders for the gold haired child  
 Of the bright Lightning. Up these self-same heights  
 His cyrie-haunts of old, he now to youth  
 Full-fledged and these great pinions, sped like wind  
 Sped upward still, like Hope that with delight  
 As with remembrance all unsatisfied  
 Up to the topmost mountains still aspires.



## PERSEUS

A cool remembered air his nostrils met.  
 He tore from off the precipice a sprig  
 Of pine-cone, that its bitter odour keen  
 Might scent with earth ethereal solitudes.  
 And lifted on the breeze of his own strength  
 Even with an eddy of immortal wings  
 Was on that alp, with but the doming blue  
 About him as of old, inhaling fresh  
 Old memories. Now the plunging slope he passed  
 And cavern opposite the sunset-flush  
 Where him, a gazing boy upon the breast  
 Of Danaë, paternal thunders reared  
 Long since, and storm-winds suckled mightily.  
 As a young lion on the mountain-top  
 Is reared beneath his tawny mother's teats,  
 High on the wuthering crags within some deep  
 Ravine: and over them the pine-trunks tower.  
 So dear to Perseus' heart this cradle-cave  
 These swaddling desolations. Yet though dear  
 Fired with his quest, he passed them coldly by.  
 From ledge to ledge he darted, cloud to cloud:  
 And now at last the windy summit bare  
 Bestrid; and his cloak whipping, his curls flying  
 Hurl'd from the mountain's crest into the heavens.  
 Beneath him sank away in rolling slopes  
 The steep of Akalessos, flinging down  
 By crag and dell and cliff towards the sea:  
 The sea! And on its broad circumference  
 Sails tossing, and all round the hazèd shores!  
 Westward he looked where softly purple rose  
 Sheer from the glassy wave precipitous  
 The land of Pelops, crowned with thy steep snow  
 Arcadia. Here the lovely Cyclades  
 Isle upon mountained isle hung blue in air  
 To east. And toward the ruffling northern blast,  
 Beneath her peaks divine dozed Attica.  
 The vastness, the swift ease, the mighty view  
 Filled with exhilaration measureless  
 His spirit, adding to the limbs of youth  
 Incredible robustness. On he sped  
 Like a sunbeam. But could not so outstrip  
 Pallas and her celestial wisdom swift



## BOOK VI

To overtake him with fresh fires of trial  
 And with a last temptation overcome,  
 For suddenly between the sister float  
 A tender gleam surprised him from the earth  
 'Twas Olpae looked at him with snowy roofs.  
 There was the river, there the pine-fledged steep ;  
 And glimmering on its rock-hemmed citadel  
 Sprang up with flanking towers king Dictys' halls.  
 Down from his fingers dropped the spray of pine!  
 Abruptly did he check in mid career  
 And hard upon resisting feathers leaned  
 Impassioned, while these pensive sighs out-breathed :  
 ' What shall become of thee, O golden head,  
 Menaced with myriad spears? Thou in the chest  
 That tossed my baby sleep, when roared the winds  
 And the wild sprays came flying did'st enmesh  
 And cloud me all in garrisoning gold,  
 Mother! And I, do I abandon thee  
 Thus to the tempest? For towards thy face,  
 The world's one boast, what throng of angry spears  
 What strength of love-hurt heroes bent for war,  
 Sweeps! I but now beheld them, even now  
 I flew above their thunder-brooding march.  
 And soon shall all this peaceful flowery plain  
 Clash with battalions fierce. O then what shield  
 Mine absent, shall protect thee? Not the heart  
 And not the hand of my brave foster sire,  
 Nor yet his son Pantaleon's daring thoughts,  
 Nor all that valour that from Argos blown  
 Follows me still, attracted by my fame,  
 Yet without me, their leader, vainly brave  
 Blind, orderless, a misdirected throng.  
 What then? Shall I then, like a bolt, at once  
 Drop from the blue amongst my enemies,  
 And guard thee sure, and give unto the winds  
 The dread illustrious quest? Alas, I rave!  
 And from my thoughts let slip the lucid words  
 Of Pallas, her last words upon the beach,—  
 "Nought but the Gorgon's head," she cried, "O prince  
 Of heroes, that world-marbling countenance  
 Severed by thee, and to Seriphos fetched  
 Shall bring the dear reprieve to Danaë



## P E R S E U S

Hard pressed." So spake she. And behold! the wings  
 She dowered me with, those brothers of the storm  
 And stormblast, that have me, their earthly lord,  
 Scarce on this tardy verge of retrospect  
 Disdainfully upheld, with violence  
 Pull at my ankles, rushing Gorgonward.  
 Farewell! farewell! and thou, instructor dear  
 In all brave arts heroic, at whose side  
 In battle and the arena's manly strife,  
 I, thy sea-waif, thy little Perseus, reached  
 This pitch and tower of praise. O warrior sage  
 Dictys, farewell. And Klymene, the queen  
 Benignant, second mother! and thou, shoot  
 Of those two royal boughs, farewell and hail,  
 Heart of my heart, Pantaleon. O pines  
 Of Olpae, and the cliffs delectable  
 All blue-surrounded, spray-kissed, my heart's home  
 And great untiring voice of the male sea.  
 And thou, O deep-confided roof, guard well  
 I charge thee, oh, inviolably guard  
 One precious head, until my swift return.'  
 So spake the arrested hero, in mid-air  
 Like the wind hover poised a moment—then  
 To the far heavens that greatly summoned him  
 He turned, as to depart,—but tarried still.  
 Still lagged the Gorgon-hunter and looked back;  
 Though deep through all the leafage of his soul  
 The great chase blew and clarion glory called;  
 And those two mastiff pinions, as in full quest  
 Of their dread Quarry far beyond the sun  
 And sunset, at his feet a storm of feathers  
 Tugged in their leash and strained upon the scent.  
 Still did he look, buried in soft regrets.  
 When lo! as if the steadfast earth should sink  
 'Neath man's confiding foot, he felt the air  
 Totter beneath him. Rallying all his strength  
 Against the difficult breezes mightily  
 He swayed, he ran if yet the glorious wings  
 Remembering their primal fairy power  
 Might from his force, his re-inspiring force  
 Borrow infection. Vain! The glorious wings  
 Still, still, with swoon of ineffectual feathers



## BOOK VI

Sank ; and himself entangled after dragged.  
 And with such proud surprise and with such pain  
 Indignant as some arrow-anguished swan  
 Down through the dreadful breezes Perseus fell.  
 And now on the deep sea had those strong limbs  
 Left but a single bubble, had not soon  
 Pallas, who pace for pace invisible  
 Followed her daring novice through the air,  
 Towards him stretched an interposing hand.  
 Straight at her touch in magical assent  
 Righted the fledge eternal: the pale son  
 Of Danaë, on point to plunge at last,  
 In dizzy sympathy and dread desire,  
 To emerald oblivion, felt his foot  
 Sudden upon the delicate sea-foam  
 Arrested, safe as on accustomed earth ;  
 And o'er the hungry ooze, his ready grave  
 Stood hovering. Upward to the lark-thrilled height  
 Whence he had fallen, his bewildered eyes  
 He cast, the dreadful rush of that steep air  
 Still bubbling in his ears, as falling still:  
 So deaf and dizzy all, he gazed around  
 Till by a waft, as of celestial power  
 About him, made aware, and burning-helmed  
 Splendour armipotent, he turned and saw  
 With raiment fluttering in the sprays unwet  
 Pallas. Upon her mighty lance she leaned  
 Which the light air supported, her gray eyes  
 Majestic on the fallen hero fixed  
 Their piercing splendour, while the voice divine  
 Shook all his soul interrogating thus:  
 ' O wherefore hiest thou hitherto, falcon swift?  
 And why from yon aerial battlements  
 So lately scaled with sun-impassioned plume  
 And quenchless ardour, now that self-same way,  
 Pale, breathless and amazed, speak, wherefore, son  
 Of Danaë cam'st thou abandoning  
 The path I showed: What fear, what auguring chill  
 Of perils to be dared too terrible  
 Hath shook thee on the glorious journey's brink?  
 Didst thou at yawn of all these endless heavens  
 Pause on prevented rashness? Or did gloom



## PERSEUS

Of Hades dreadful cap dissuade thee? or  
 From deepest ocean through the dim green wave  
 Frightening the sea with fire did Herpe burn?  
 Yet well do I commend thee son of Zeus.  
 For not to lay down tasks ill undertook  
 And rashly, but in rashness to persist  
 Argues the fool and unto laughter brings.  
 Wherefore methinks, with wise well-judging haste  
 Thou hast forsook the toppling firmament  
 Yea, than Athene wiser, back again  
 Descended. Look, unto thy step how close  
 The beach beloved, and close above thy head  
 The cliff, the slopes of Olpae, and thy home.  
 Sad at her loom thy gentle mother sits.  
 She marvels wherefore her heroic son  
 Her Perseus, her sole pride, her dear support  
 Returns not yet, and oft with wistful gaze  
 Looks out at door, expecting thy approach.  
 Come, put these playthings from thy noble feet,  
 These useless, these unnecessary wings.  
 So Pallas in cold words of doubtful praise  
 Veiling severest blame, the fallen Strength  
 Still tempted. He, with his abysmal fall  
 Though shaken still, perceived: and all alarmed,  
 Lest from his feet the voyage wonderful  
 Exhale like morning dewdrop, answered straight:  
 'Not useless, nor unnecessary yet  
 Goddess, if still thy puissant aid be mine:  
 Thou who upon thy mystic mirroring shield  
 Did'st glass the Gorgon's head, and bid me go  
 To seek her through this desert of blank air  
 Shoeing my tardy feet with wings divine.  
 Dost thou then bid me these thy mighty gifts  
 Put off, and like a log inglorious lie  
 Like a felled tree the shipwright hath forgot,  
 That yonder lies by those blue sighing pines  
 Of Olpae, far from the adventurous foam?  
 And though thou giv'st me her, my mother dear,  
 Must I on these dull crags forever sleep  
 To swiftness and the rash delight of wings,  
 I who have soared unto the heights of dawn  
 And drunk of the sun's glory. O, believe,



## BOOK VI

No sight no auguring fear of perils deemed  
 Too terrible, nor difficult exploit  
 (Though here thou see'st me fluttered, baffled, fallen)  
 Hath shook me on the glorious journey's brink.  
 Nor did the hat of Hades with forefelt  
 Blackness appal, nor through the sunless wave  
 Did Herpe frighten the cold sea with fire.  
 But why superfluous shall I tell the cause  
 To thee, Wisdom ineffable? Thou knowest.  
 I ran upon the breeze, a swifter breeze  
 Blown from thy presence, when beneath me passed  
 Unconquerable sweetness. Back I looked:  
 Beheld these happy cliffs, these haunting pines.  
 At that some sudden wrath or frailty seized  
 The feathers huge. They failed me, and I fell.  
 'Behoved it then a hero to look back?'  
 Pallas, in anger cried, 'behoved it then  
 To stay, arrested at one beck of earth,  
 Before thee all the glory of the heavens,  
 And melt in farewell? What should follow hence  
 But shame and baffling downfall? And whose then  
 The frailty, thine? or these ethereal wings,  
 But servants unto thee, to thy bold will  
 Confederate? who methought couldst never thus  
 Lag on the way momentous, and regret  
 And turn and gaze like some pale wistful girl  
 That leaves her father's home, a tender bride.  
 Thou, sprung from that immortal glittering!  
 And kindred to the dust of kings, that sleep  
 In Argos, dreaming of their race divine!  
 O tarnished brightness of the all-golden shower,  
 O blood of demigods discredited,  
 Put off for very shame, put quickly off,  
 Those deep-insulted pinions, lest they rise  
 With fury round thy feet and tear in blood  
 Their swiftness from thy hesitating heels.'  
 So speaking, she towards him one strong hand  
 Stretched with imperious gesture to receive  
 The radiant wings. But on their hovering span  
 All tameless Perseus stood, and unconvinced,  
 For great heroic pains and risk and death  
 Thirsting insatiably, thus began:



## PERSEUS

'O be not wroth, Athene! Invulnerable,  
Serenely in awful pureness of repose  
And strong with bliss of immortality  
Ye, the blest gods, dwell on Olympus, calm.  
But we, terrestrial things, whose boldest thought  
Death crumbles, whom beleaguering sorrows mine,  
And love too shatters, how shall we maintain  
The swerveless strength of gods invincible.  
Thou speakest of my heaven-raised origin.  
Yet thou from the omnipotence of Zeus  
Pouring in splendour, this heroic mould  
I took, this mien and stature of a god,  
At which men gaze with admiration thrilled,  
Remember my enweaved mortality,  
And be a turn, a look, a parting tear  
Permitted me, nor in a demigod  
Unpardonable. Goddess, well I know,  
But mortal, with a mortal's prescience sad,  
Soon, soon shall that inevitable dusk  
O'ertake me and these limbs of haughty strength  
Lie in the earth all strengthless. But ere that  
I would with flying footsteps wound the winds,  
And ocean pierce, and glooms impenetrable  
Disdainful of a living foot invade.  
I would rush on, naming the unknown capes,  
By many a Titan shape and sorrow huge,  
On, right unto the dolorous foam  
And isle tremendous. I would drink my fill  
Of terror and utmost beauty, I would cut  
Unshrinking from the serpent-shadowed neck  
Medusa's dripping head, I would assuage  
Unto the core this thirst magnificent  
For action; to fill full my mortal hours  
With deeds imperishable. Daughter of Zeus,  
The mists of morn unrobe the sparkling sea.  
Dismiss me on the preappointed way.'  
At these bold words breathing adventurous fire  
A kindling lofty pleasure through the soul  
Of Pallas swelled, upon her anvil fierce  
On which she forges men, to have beat out  
This glowing steel, and in her noble eyes  
A splendour shone, such joy as goddesses



## BOOK VI

Feel in the strength of heroes glorying.  
 But quickly she resumed severer brows.  
 And bent unto the uttermost to probe  
 The Olympian blood within him rallying,  
 As thus with firm, unwavering voice he said:  
 'Content thee, mighty goddess. These thy gifts  
 That thy hand gave, that thy own fingers tied,  
 As worthy of my famed heroic worth  
 I mean to keep, irrecoverably mine.  
 Not though thou slay me shall I part with them.  
 And ere thou reave my steps of this great road  
 Heaven-fated, ere with thy resistless power,  
 Child of all powerful Zeus, thou bar my way  
 Bethink thee, lest the father, who decreed  
 My footsteps, this thy rash impediment  
 Seeing, be wroth and chide thee afterward.'  
 So spake the Thunderer's seed, bold in his sire,  
 And scarce had spoken, when from cloudless height  
 Ethereal, as in answer, muttering pealed  
 The far parental thunder. Pallas heard  
 That sound. She stood. Joy, admiration keen,  
 Pride, wonder and exulting sympathy  
 Swept through her lofty soul, of unshook nerve  
 And fearlessness enamoured. Down she dropped  
 Her mighty lance upon the wave; she lowered  
 Her aegis dark; and to the audacious son  
 Of Danaë, as o'er the waves he stood  
 Dauntless and pale with utmost daring, ran.  
 His golden head caressingly she touched  
 With her eternal fingers, and with cheek  
 All glowing, thus her joy celestial spake:  
 'O tossing flame of courage beautiful,  
 Offspring of the omnipotence that rolls  
 In thunder o'er our heads, acknowledging  
 Thee his own darling hero, his brave son,  
 O son of Danaë, of my soul beloved,  
 Be not abashed that thus with semblance wroth  
 Athene rushed at thee. I did but mean  
 To test thy heart, to put unto the proof  
 That far-famed gleaming courage, that so oft  
 I have beheld unsheathed in mortal play  
 With danger, in the murderous crash of spears



## PERSEUS

Mid swaying, shouting armies, or in lost  
 Battle's extremity forth-blazing ;—sword  
 Of truest temper, yet not proof perhaps  
 Not measurable with immortal foes  
 Or her, my fair and mighty adversary,  
 The marble-curdling Terror snaky-haired  
 Medusa. She of the old Titan brood  
 Now subjugate and dim dethronèd powers,  
 Remnants of Kronos and Daemonian Eld,  
 Not dungeoned like the fiery breath of some  
 Safe beneath mountains huge, nor doomed with force  
 Cohibited, like Atlas, to bear up  
 The starry heavens, nor under Hades hurled,  
 Hath in the gloomy confines of the West  
 Waxed dangerous in all her daemon power  
 And threatens now with formidable pace  
 To issue from the falling dusk that veils  
 The cheek of sunset, turning as she comes  
 With one look of her baleful countenance  
 All breathing life into a trance of stone.  
 And shall fulfil her threat, so hath foreseen  
 The Thunderer on Olympus musing deep,  
 Unless some hero soul, that from his blood  
 Draws courage superhuman, do, with aid  
 Of me, his daughter and his wisdom, quell  
 This might portentous and, together, stem  
 This threatened marble deluge of the world.  
 Well had I need, O son of Danaë,  
 To pick my champion out, that all unblenched  
 Antagonist of Gorgons, that shall save  
 The trembling world. Down from the peak I sprang  
 Of glimmering Olympus, seeking out  
 Thee, Perseus, famous now, and blazed about  
 Through all the breadth of Hellas and the isles  
 For deeds of loftiest pitch, the rumoured son of Zeus  
 Reared in sun-beat Seriphos. Thee I found  
 At Polydectes' feast, mid wine-flush'd crowds  
 Alone and fearless 'gainst a pillar leaned,  
 Yet standing there a bold self-bidden guest  
 While chieftain after chieftain passed thee by,  
 With gold and gifts for that proud king. On thee  
 Then looked he, and with well feigned wonder spake



## BOOK VI

"Hast thou no gift, O son of Danaë,  
 That hast this long time sojourned in my land,  
 Thou, the rich heir reported of the wide  
 Argolic land and Argos lofty-walled,—  
 No belt, no sword, no proud careering steed?"  
 Stung with the biting mockery thou stood'st.  
 Then in thy mouth I put that Titan boast  
 Inspired: "O ruler of Seriphos' isle  
 Lo, from the baths of sunset, such my zeal  
 To serve thee, from the doorways of the dusk  
 A terrible and beauteous gift I bring;—  
 No belt, no sword, no proud careering steed,  
 But the grim Gorgon's head with horror curled,  
 That, lifted up by this adventurous hand,  
 Shall put thee to a marble wondering."  
 So crying, from the purple banquet forth  
 I led thee, my superb new-bitted steed  
 For the first bound of thine aerial race  
 Moulding thee with the bloodied spur of rage  
 And vengeance. Thus the lonely midnight shore  
 Thee burning, me invisible received.  
 Still doubted I such mission to confide  
 To human hands and frail untested feet.  
 To test thee and to school thee then I sought.  
 For this cause I will apparition swift  
 Surprised thee, and swiftly without any word  
 Yoked this unmeasured force of deathless wings  
 To thy weak human ankles; and with short  
 Swift offer of the glorious enterprise  
 Which thou hadst grasped and strained for but in dream  
 Fired thee into the unfamiliar waste  
 Of air; for this cause did I leave untold  
 The ambush of the dearness all too dear  
 That smote thy heart from Olpae; for this cause  
 I met thee in thy fall with sharp rebuke  
 Imperative re-claiming the bright loan  
 Of these heroic plumes, nor satisfied  
 With noble words unmatched by noble deeds  
 I rose against thee as in kindled wrath,  
 And with my shaken aegis bickering  
 Fierce light, and brooding hurricane, pushed I  
 The rigorous probation. Thou hast stood



## PERSEUS

The test ; for as the eagle native-born  
 To ride the unfathomed blast thou hast sustained  
 That dizziness undaunted ; nor yet quailed  
 When sunk the fluttering wings, nor cowered beneath  
 Reproof, but with indomitable heart  
 Save to loved things and lonely Danaë  
 Hast every check, retardment and rebuff  
 With stiff persistence met : and best, what least  
 I hoped for, against immortality  
 Down-bearing on thee and with hand outstretched  
 To blot thee from the sun, thou hast stood firm,  
 Nor dreaded even my dreadfulness. Yet fear,  
 Seed of Acrisius, fear the pitying milk  
 Of gentleness that doth so well become  
 Thy manly heart : beware thee of the sweet  
 Thought of humanity that now for shores  
 Inhuman and the Titan world thou leav'st.  
 For subtle in her sweetness is the foe  
 Thou cop'st. O then put far from thee all thoughts  
 That might disedge the sternness of thy will  
 Lest with the pathos that makes beautiful  
 Her mortal shape, thy manhood she unnerve  
 And mar the mighty stroke that frees the world.  
 Then at her words deep-wondering Perseus said :  
 ' Thy warning shall I vigilantly keep  
 In the forefront of memory sentinelled.  
 But say, O puissant Splendour, for at this  
 I marvel nor can well resolve my doubt,  
 Why now my foot adventurous on the way  
 Well sped, and rushing to the strife superb  
 Thou stopp'st with this thy admonition stern?  
 Why now? nor did'st forewarn me at the first.  
 To which with grave regard the maiden Power :  
 ' To burn into thy swift-oblivious breast  
 The sorely needed lesson. For like waves,  
 Like the light-rippling waves that this way stir  
 For zephyrus, and that way now when blows  
 The gust of Notos or with Boreas tower,—  
 Such are your spirits unmindful, sons of men :  
 So lightly with each gust of circumstance  
 Ruffled, as to forego the cloudy print  
 Of word, or hest, or counsel or reproof.



## BOOK VI

Though wisdom's own, unless the dint  
 Of bitterest experience brand it home.  
 Yet though I thus forbid thee to look back  
 Take sweet assurance, Perseus, to thy soul  
 Her shall I still o'ershadow with my power  
 For whom thou fear'st thy mother Danaë.  
 Now fling thee on the flash of wind-swift wings.  
 Yet stay, another gift as needful to thee,  
 Take, ere thou go. It is this dazzling shield  
 One sheer and single opal, handiwork  
 Of gods, in whose unfathomable depths  
 I showed thee late the baleful Gorgon head.  
 A mystical and fearful thing it is ;  
 Air circles in it, 'tis another world  
 Mirroring ours. The perils of the way  
 This shall foreshadow; and when thou shalt come  
 To thy dread foe, this planetary orb  
 Held thus above thee with a dauntless hand  
 Shall to thy sworded other guiding show,  
 Innocuous on its polished face reflected,  
 The Face, that seen, would blanch thee into stone,  
 Take it, and hence, outshooting the sun's fire.  
 And be it but to prove this buckle's power,  
 Catch in its magic mirror, if thou wilt,  
 A lightning-swift, a momentary sight  
 Of Olpae and king Dictys' palace-halls  
 And Danaë. So far it is indulged  
 To thy brave heart—One moment and no more.'  
 She ceased and to his hand ceded the orb  
 Of that moon-mocking opal. Quick he seized  
 The splendour, and immediately, as fire  
 Leaps on the breeze, he threw the alternate weight  
 Of his impetuous feet on each bold wing.  
 They hungrily received him. But that shield  
 Refulgent, mystic, shone within his hand,  
 Like the new-risen moon, when over fields  
 And towers by some beleagured city's walls  
 She rises, and to heroes ambushed stern  
 With pent breath under perilous battlements  
 Brings the soft moonlit thought of other fields  
 Or towers or sea-washed crags. So suddenly  
 Remembering, while the mighty pinions moved



## PERSEUS

Flapping and sweeping under, toward his own  
Sea-murmured crags the son of Zeus upraised  
The disc of that strange shield all shimmering  
And flashing like the deep seas' summer calm.  
And as within the deep sea's summer calm  
Home-fevered men see home, so in that face  
Of opal he in flashed reflection saw  
Sweet Olpae, saw king Dicty's palace-halls  
And Danaë. Drowns amid pillows lay  
Her shinning head. Then by that unrevenged  
Dear face to resolution trebly steeled  
And tenfold ardour lifted, like a storm  
Like whirlwind he rose up into the air;  
Even such as on the summer roads we see  
After long drought, and whirled in circling towers  
The dust goes heavenward. At the self-same moment  
With her strong hand imparting tireless strength  
Athene smote him. As the swallow darts  
He darted on his heavenly-plumaged wings,  
Lessening and ever lessening out of sight.



# **A P P E N D I X**



## APPENDIX

The following notes of the poet relating to the story of Perseus, its treatment and symbolism are found in different MSS volumes.

### *Choice of Legend*

As is clear from the note of the poet given below, the legend of Perseus was chosen because of the scope it offered.

'Before he (Homer) starts for Smyrna he tells Perseus who he is and chants a stave of his verse. Perseus, dejected and awed, asks where he will find the poet who will sing his adventures. Homer replies, 'Some groves onward. A bard that shall be from the banks of the Ganges in India and in times remote from me, inspired by me, shall champion you.' Perseus asks why he should wait so long for a poet while Achilles, Hector and Odysseus found theirs so soon. Homer again replies, 'Because of the more extensive scope of your exploit. My heroes work for Greece but you are toiling for mankind with immediate effect on all generations, so that it will be centuries and ages before the result of the slaying of Medusa will be evident to your poet—therefore must he needs come much later in time.'

(MS. Volume IX, page 1)

### *The Story*

The story of the adventure of Perseus which appears to be gathered from various sources is sketched out by the poet in the following note.

'The slender boat which carried Danae and her son was driven by the winds upon the coasts of the island of Seriphos, one of the islands of the Cyclades, where they were found by a fisherman named Dictys and carried to Polydectes the king of the place. They were treated with great humanity and Perseus was entrusted to the care of the priests of Athene's temple. His rising genius and manly courage, however, soon displeased Polydectes and the monarch who wished to offer violence to Danaë feared the resentment of her son. Yet Polydectes resolved to remove every obstacle. He invited all his friends to a sumptuous feast and it was required that all such as came should present the monarch with a beautiful horse. Perseus was



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amongst the number of the invited and the more particularly as Polydectes knew that he was too poor to give him any present. Nevertheless Perseus, wishing not to appear inferior to others in magnificence, told the king that as he could not give him a horse he would bring him the head of Medusa the only one of the Gorgons who was subject to mortality. The offer was doubly agreeable to Polydectes as it would remove Perseus from Seriphos and on account of its seeming impossibility the attempt might perhaps end in his ruin. But the innocence of Perseus was patronized by the gods. Pluto lent him his helmet which had the wonderful power of making him invisible. Minerva gave him her buckler which was resplendent as glass and he received from Mercury wings and the taleria with a short dagger made of diamonds and called Herpe. According to some it was not from Mercury but from Hephaestus that he received Herpe which was in the form of a scythe. With these arms Perseus began his expedition and traversed the air conducted by the goddess Athena. He went to the Graeae, the sisters of the Gorgons, who had wings like the Gorgons but only one tooth and one eye among them all of which each made use in turn. They were three in number according to Aeschylus and Apollodorus. Perseus was able to steal the eye and their tooth while they were asleep and only returned them when they informed him where their sisters the Gorgons resided. When he had received every necessary information Perseus flew to the habitation of the Gorgons which were situated beyond the Western Ocean according to Hesiod and Apollodorus and in Libia according to Ovid and Lucan and the deserts of Asia according to Aeschylus. He found the monsters asleep and as he knew that if he fixed his eyes on them he would be turned to stone, he continually looked on his shield which reflected all objects as clearly as in the best glass. He approached with a courage which Athena supported. He cut off the head of Medusa with a blow. The noise awoke the two immortal sisters but Pluto's helmet rendered Perseus invisible and the attempts of the Gorgons to avenge Medusa's death proved futile. The conqueror made his way through the air and from the blood which dropped from Medusa's head sprang all those innumerable serpents who since infested the sandy deserts of Lybia. Chrysaos, also, his golden sword sprang from the drops of blood as well as the horse Pegasus which immediately flew through the air and



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stopped in Mount Helicon where he became the favourite of the Muses.

On the morrow Perseus continued his flight and as he passed across the deserts of Libya he discovered on the coasts of Aethiopia Andromeda exposed to a sea monster. He was struck at the sight and offered her father Cepheus to deliver her from instant death if he obtained her in marriage as a reward for his labour. Cepheus consented and immediately Perseus raised himself in the air, flew towards the monster which was ready to devour Andromeda and he plunged his dagger in his right shoulder killing him. The happy event was met with the greatest rejoicings. Perseus raised there an altar to Hermes, Zeus and Athena and after he had offered the sacrifice of a calf, a bullock and a heifer, the nuptials were celebrated with the greatest festivity. The universal joy was, however, soon disturbed. Pheneus, Andromeda's uncle, entered the palace with a number of armed men and attempted to carry away the bride, whom he had courted and admired long before the arrival of Perseus. Cepheus and Cassiopeia interfered but in vain; a bloody fight ensued and Perseus must have fallen a victim to the rage of Pheneus had he not defended himself with the same arms which proved fatal to Atlas. He showed the Gorgon's head to his adversaries and they were instantly turned into stone, each in the posture and attitude in which he stood. The friends of Cepheus such as supported Perseus were not astonished at the fate of Pheneus as the hero had previously told them of the power of Medusa's head and the services he had received from it. Soon after the memorable adventure Perseus returned to Seriphos at the very moment that his mother Danaë fled to the altar of Minerva to avoid the pursuit of Polydectes. He defended her against the attempts of his enemies. Later he placed Dictys upon the throne of Seriphos after he had with Medusa's head turned into stone the wicked Polydectes and the officers who were the associates of his guile. He afterwards returned to Hermes his taleria and wings, to Pluto his helmet and unto Minerva her shield, but as he was particularly indebted to the goddess of Wisdom for her assistance and protection, he placed the Gorgon's head on her shield, rather her Aegis.

(MS. Volume XIV, page 91)



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### *The Treatment*

The first element of the story, the adventure of Perseus is already marked out for us in the famous legend from which it is impossible to deviate very far.

Slight deviations . . . (a) Perseus has to fetch the cap of Hades from the cave of Acheron in my story and is not given it by Athena as it probably was in the real legend in the oldest Greek poetry.

(b) In the same way he has to fetch Herpe the wonderful sword, instead of being given it, from the sea-depths.

(c) The Graeae are imagined as blooming with emotion and youthful passion under the mask of old age.

(d) Perseus performs the voyage by air from Aethiopia isle to Seriphos instead of by ship. He snatches Andromeda into his arms in the sight of her parents and suitors and flies high up into the air shot by arrows.

The second element can be managed entirely as I like since the old legend says nothing about it except that Danaë is persecuted by Polydectes (actually ravished and made a concubine by him in Pindar).

The points I have determined on are these: Following the model of Odyssey, Danaë is courted by suitors from all parts of Greece owing to the reason of her beauty and the secret hope of inheriting the kingship of Argos and Achaea, now that Acrisius and Proetus are old and Perseus the true heir, an exiled and homeless youth, whom they might cajole or get rid of. But Perseus soon shows his wisdom and might. He penetrates their disguise and turns them out of Olpae with the aid of the sons of Dictys and the citizens. They resort to Seriphos city and conjoin themselves to Polydectes, the king, who has long been a wooer of Danaë, (first as a violent wooer when she was unprotected and last a courtly and crafty wooer). With him they muster the wide nations to war and mean to satisfy their vengeance on Perseus and Dictys and his sons beseiging Olpae and sacking it, thereby also possessing themselves of Danaë.

(Perseus MS. Volume XVI, pages 7-12)

### *The Symbolism of the Epic*

The slaying of Medusa, who alone of the three Gorgons is mortal, forms the central theme of the poem.





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We find the nature of the Gorgons in the following note of the poet

'*The Gorgons*—the genius of destruction.

*Medusa* comes from the West because that is the dark goal of the sun and all life.

The Gorgon lying at the root of the sea and earth has already sent her petrifying gaze into the heart of things that is why everything is stagnating over the surface of the globe. She will finish her work by rising and stiffening into stone, one by one, with her slow gaze all living things.'

(MS. Volume IV, page 167)

The poet distinguishes between Medusa and Hades thus:

'Hades represents in the epic the future world and a belief in it, whereas Medusa represents nihilism and annihilation and disbelief in a future world.'

(MS. Volume I, page 60)

In the Epic the Titans are probably the earlier uncontrolled forces of Cosmic Nature and Life, and in this context the Olympian gods probably represent more intellectualized and humanistic powers. Zeus having defeated the Titans was now controlling and using the blind forces of Nature and Life to guide the universe to a higher goal. For this purpose his chief instrument Man was created by him with the help of Prometheus. The defeated Titans in revenge are rearing up Medusa to annihilate man and destroy all life, thus thwarting the benevolent purpose of Zeus. The older and newer gods are correlated by the poet in a note in one of the MSS volumes. We are also told what they represent.

'Aphrodite—Physical desire

Eros—Spiritual love, passion, attachment

Oceanus and Tethys—The seas

Coeus, Phoebus, Astrea, Leto—Light and stars

Hyperion and Thea—Sun and moon

Kronos, Rhea, Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Here and Demeter  
—Heaven and earth

Themis and Athena—Wisdom

Mnemosyne and the Muses—Poetry'

### *Two Ideas Basic to the Epic*

One of these is the idea of progress or progression. In one of the notes the poet shows that at one stage the poet





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hesitated as to which of the two ideas given below he would adopt for his Epic.

'Progression, increasing sensitiveness of mankind as the ages progress or merely progression of history?'

(MS. Volume IV. page 49)

A second idea relates to what the poet calls the ethics of the poem.

'The birth of the soul in history. This is the basic idea of the ethics of the poem. All the strong and angelic spirits try to break the sleep and petrification of animal nature. The heroes by their courage, the martyrs by their suffering, the saints by purity, the sages by austere contemplation and thought or active preaching of moral and spiritual ideas, the artists and poets by their infusing soul and beauty spiritual into conditions of matter conquering brute earth—ordinary men by following the example of the human seers and pioneers of the life mortal.'

(MS. Volume IV. page 45)

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